



22 June 2022

Tēnā koe

On 3 June 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

*A copy of all MSD policies/guidelines/instructions relating to or about:*

- 1. What items/purposes advance benefit can be made for and decision-making around such requests.*
- 2. When requests for Food grants can be granted and decision making around such requests.*

Regarding part one of your request, all clients receiving a main benefit, Orphans Benefit, Unsupported Childs Benefit, New Zealand Superannuation or Veteran's Pension who need assistance to meet a particular immediate need for an essential item or service, may get an Advance of up to 6 weeks of their benefit.

Consideration must be given to whether an Advance would best meet their immediate need. Ministry staff will investigate other sources of assistance to meet the immediate need and consider the client's ability to repay the Advance. This includes when an essential need is provided under the Advance Payment of Benefit categories. You can find more information regarding advance payment of benefits and eligibility at the following links:

- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/introduction.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/introduction.html), and
- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/qualifications.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/qualifications.html).

You can find further information regarding what Advance Payment of Benefits can be used for and the payment limits at the following two links:

- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/payment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/payment.html), and
- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/advance-payment-of-benefit-tables/income-limits-current.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/advance-payment-of-benefit-tables/income-limits-current.html).

Regarding part two of your request, Special Needs Grants (SNGs) provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to clients to meet immediate needs. A client does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for SNGs. You can find more information regarding SNGs at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/introduction.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/introduction.html).

If the client meets all qualifications, they may be able to receive a SNG for food. You can find more information regarding qualifications and SNGs for food, at the following links:

- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/qualifications.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/qualifications.html), and
- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/food-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/food-01.html).

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding decision making for advance benefit and food grants, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

*Bridget Saunders*

Bridget Saunders  
**Manager, Issues Resolution  
Service Delivery**