



31 October 2022

Tēnā koe

On 4 October 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- Is it possible to also obtain:*
- *An age breakdown (total year) for both categories*
 - *Ethnicity breakdown for all applicants (total for year) for both categories*

The information you have requested relates to all grants, funds given, loans and applications for costs of dental treatment to MSD over the past 10 years, broken down to include the number of applications each year, geographic location of claims, amount claimed/granted and any claims that were not paid out or accepted.

Please find **Appendix One** attached, which contains the following tables:

- **Table One:** Special Needs Grants and Advances paid for dental assistance, broken down by region and financial year between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022.
- **Table Two:** The number of Special Needs Grants and Advance applications for dental assistance, broken down by region and financial year between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022.
- **Table Three:** The number of Special Needs Grants and Advance applications for dental assistance, broken down by age and financial year between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022.
- **Table Four:** The number of Special Needs Grants and Advance applications for dental assistance, broken down by Ethnicity and financial year between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022.

From December 2022, the limit to Special Needs Grants for dental treatment will increase from \$300 to \$1,000. This is non-recoverable, so it doesn't need to be paid back. In addition to this, the requirement for the need to be emergency dental work will also be removed.

Additionally, there will no longer be a limit on the number of Special Needs Grants for dental treatment a client can access in a 52-week period. People who require multiple treatments to treat an issue will be able to do so, up until they have reached the \$1,000 maximum limit.

From December 2021, we have changed our ethnicity reporting to an approach called 'total response'. Making this change means we recognise all aspects of someone's ethnicity. This change reflects our clients more accurately, aligns our approach with Statistics NZ's reporting and reflects best practice. Ethnicity is about people's identity and sense of belonging. Ethnicity measures cultural affiliation, rather than race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived and people can identify with more than one ethnic group. Previously, we reported ethnicity using an approach called 'prioritised ethnicity'. 'Prioritised ethnicity' means that we allocate people to a single ethnic group in an order of priority. The priority used by MSD previously was Māori, Pacific Peoples, Other and NZ European.

For more information about 'total response' for ethnicity reporting, please see: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/tools/how-we-report-ethnicity.html.

Regarding the tables provided, please note that the Territorial Location Authority (TLA) is estimated based on the clients' address at the time of the grant. Where the client address is not recorded, the location of the Ministry's service centre case managing the client has been used to approximate which TLA a client resides in.

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 and attachments 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding dental assistance, 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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

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Manager Issue Resolution
Service Delivery