



30 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 9 September 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *A breakdown of all grants, funds given, applications for costs of dental surgery to MSD for dental treatment over the past 10 years including loans.*
 - *Ideally this is 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.*

The Ministry provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs (including medical and dental costs), power and other costs. These payments are available to any person if they meet an income and asset test and they are unable to meet the cost from any other source.

The Ministry recognises that individuals who are in receipt of a benefit may not be able to budget for unexpected dental costs, and support is available for those who meet the criteria to help with the cost of dental work.

All dental treatments funded through the Ministry must be provided by a health agency or registered dental practitioner. Examples of a qualifying dental situation include, but are not limited to, root treatment, tooth extraction, tooth restoration and treatment of acute infection.

The maximum amount payable to a person applying for a non-recoverable Special Needs Grant towards the cost of dental treatment is \$300 within any 52-week period. Where exceptional circumstances apply, this amount may be exceeded, or more than one payment may be made. In situations where there are no exceptional circumstances, or where individuals do not meet the qualifying criteria for a Special Needs Grant, they may qualify for an Advance Payment of Benefit to meet any or all remaining costs.

Please note, Budget 2022 changes will result in an increase up to \$1,000 in a 52-week period for immediate and essential dental work from 1 December 2022. Further information on dental treatment assistance can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/dental-treatment.html

You will find the following two tables attached in response to your request in **Appendix One:**

- **Table One:** The number of Special Needs Grants and benefit advance grants paid for dental work, 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 granted and declined for dental work, broken down by region and financial year between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2022.

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, 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

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
**Manager Issue Resolution
Service Delivery**