



3 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 16 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Between 2012 - 2022, how many hardship grants were given out in New Zealand?*
- *Can you please provide a breakdown of each year showing how many grants were given out, as well as the age, gender and location of where these hardship grants were given out.*
- *We'd also like to know the financial total of the grants given out each year.*

The Ministry, through Work and Income, provides recoverable and non-recoverable financial assistance to help people meet an immediate need for essential items such as food, health costs, power and other costs.

These payments are available to any person as long as they meet the income and asset test, and they are unable to meet the cost for an essential need from any other source.

The Ministry ensures that people receive their correct entitlement to any other financial assistance as part of the application and assessment process.

The Ministry assists people to manage their costs in the longer term, not just with immediate and urgent assistance. It is important to understand why the client cannot meet these costs, to provide the most appropriate form of assistance. The applicant also has an obligation to manage their own finances with the help of the Ministry. This may include seeking financial advice from budgeting services.

Further information about financial assistance and eligibility can be found on the Work and Income website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/index.html.

Please find attached **Appendix One** containing the following tables:

- **Table One:** The number of hardship grants and amount granted from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2022 broken down by calendar year and age group.
- **Table Two:** The number of hardship grants and amount granted from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2022 broken down by calendar year and gender.
- **Table Three:** The number of hardship grants and amount granted from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2022 broken down by calendar year and region.

Please note, from 2016 onwards, these tables also contain the number and amount granted of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants.

For **Table Two**, the Ministry changed our gender reporting from 2 December 2019 to reflect three gender categories of male, female and gender diverse.

For **Table Three**, the region is based on the location of the Service Centre where the staff member granted the hardship assistance.

Hardship assistance can be granted for a range of immediate and essential needs. These include but are not limited to food, power, whiteware, rent and dental assistance.

You can find further information about Special Needs Grant on the Work and Income website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/index.html.

You can find further information about Recoverable Assistance Payment on the Work and Income website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/recoverable-assistance-payment/index.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 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**