



14 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 16 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

With The increasing cost of living and pressure on families, we were wondering if there had been a change in the number of people applying for help to pay school costs.
www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/children/school-costs.html

Is there any data we could request under OIA on the number of applications made this year (both total, as well as segmented into primary and secondary fees requested for help with if it is seperated)

We would also like to know the number of applications made from those under the assistance payment grant as well as those already on the benefit?

Will there be any consideration this year in changing the capped income levels with the cost of living getting more expensive for kiwi families?

Can we also request the numbers and data sets for previous years too?

We would be interested in knowing the numbers for 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019.

On 17 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry again requesting the following information:

I would love to know what the reason was for the significant drop in the number of grants given for school costs from March 2021 to March 2022.

I am also curious to know if the capped salaries for assistance are as you say, adjusted annually with MSD operating procedures or if it is a directive or an amount that changes with Ministerial Direction.

If they have not done so already, the Ministry's Media team will provide you with a response to these parts of your requests:

Will there be any consideration this year in changing the capped income levels with the cost of living getting more expensive for kiwi families?

I would love to know what the reason was for the significant drop in the number of grants given for school costs from March 2021 to March 2022.

I am also curious to know if the capped salaries for assistance are as you say, adjusted annually with MSD operating procedures or if it is a directive or an amount that changes with Ministerial Direction.

The remaining parts of your requests will be responded to in-turn under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

With The increasing cost of living and pressure on families, we were wondering if there had been a change in the number of people applying for help to pay school costs.
www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/children/school-costs.html

Is there any data we could request under OIA on the number of applications made this year (both total, as well as segmented into primary and secondary fees requested for help with if it is seperated)

We would also like to know the number of applications made from those under the assistance payment grant as well as those already on the benefit?

Can we also request the numbers and data sets for previous years too?

We would be interested in knowing the numbers for 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019.

People on low incomes can apply for hardship assistance to help with school costs. For people already receiving a benefit from the Ministry, they can receive this help under an Advance Payment of Benefit (Advance). Assistance is also available if a person is not receiving a benefit through a Recoverable Assistance Payment (RAP).

Hardship assistance for school costs is recoverable and there are eligibility criteria that need to be met. More information about Advances and RAPs can be found here:

Advances: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/advance-payment-of-benefit/school-costs-01.html

RAPs: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/recoverable-assistance-payment/school-costs-01.html

In response to your queries, please see the **Appendix** which displays the number of school related hardship grants, declines and applications processed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022.

Please note the following information regarding all data provided in the **Appendix**:

- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- The data table has had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- Random rounding does not round down to zero, a value of one or two will be rounded to three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding assistance for school costs, 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

pp Thomas Dalzell

Bridget Saunders
Manager Issue Resolution
Service Delivery

Appendix

The number of school related hardship grants, declines and applications processed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022. Broken down by benefit group, calendar year and school related cost type.

| Benefit Group / Calendar Year | | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION FEES, EXAMINATION FEES | | | SCHOOL STATIONERY | | | SCHOOL UNIFORMS | | | Total | | |
|---|------|--|----------|--|-------------------|----------|--|-----------------|----------|--|--------|----------|--|
| | | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) |
| No Benefit | 2019 | 36 | 6 | 39 | 171 | 12 | 183 | 456 | 48 | 504 | 663 | 66 | 729 |
| | 2020 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 153 | 21 | 174 | 447 | 90 | 537 | 606 | 114 | 720 |
| | 2021 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 99 | 21 | 120 | 372 | 93 | 465 | 477 | 123 | 600 |
| | 2022 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 120 | 12 | 129 | 408 | 33 | 441 | 531 | 45 | 576 |
| Orphans Benefit / Unsupported Childs Benefit | 2019 | 57 | 9 | 66 | 141 | 12 | 156 | 336 | 24 | 360 | 540 | 42 | 582 |
| | 2020 | 27 | 6 | 33 | 90 | 15 | 105 | 264 | 27 | 291 | 384 | 48 | 429 |
| | 2021 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 90 | 12 | 105 | 243 | 18 | 264 | 342 | 39 | 378 |
| | 2022 | 9 | 6 | 15 | 72 | 6 | 78 | 240 | 18 | 258 | 321 | 30 | 348 |
| New Zealand Superannuation / Veterans Pension | 2019 | 18 | 3 | 18 | 102 | 6 | 105 | 252 | 9 | 261 | 369 | 18 | 384 |
| | 2020 | 9 | 3 | 9 | 84 | 0 | 84 | 261 | 12 | 273 | 354 | 15 | 369 |
| | 2021 | 12 | 3 | 15 | 69 | 3 | 75 | 228 | 6 | 237 | 312 | 12 | 324 |
| | 2022 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 39 | 3 | 42 | 201 | 3 | 204 | 249 | 9 | 255 |
| Emergency Maintenance Allowance | 2019 | 39 | 3 | 39 | 120 | 0 | 123 | 255 | 3 | 258 | 414 | 3 | 417 |
| | 2020 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 105 | 12 | 120 | 252 | 12 | 264 | 366 | 27 | 396 |
| | 2021 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 78 | 9 | 87 | 225 | 12 | 237 | 303 | 24 | 324 |
| | 2022 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 51 | 9 | 63 | 171 | 12 | 183 | 225 | 21 | 246 |
| Supported Living Payment Related | 2019 | 360 | 6 | 369 | 1,620 | 12 | 1,632 | 3,204 | 12 | 3,216 | 5,187 | 33 | 5,217 |
| | 2020 | 99 | 15 | 114 | 1,374 | 39 | 1,413 | 3,000 | 51 | 3,048 | 4,473 | 102 | 4,572 |
| | 2021 | 66 | 12 | 78 | 1,221 | 30 | 1,251 | 2,943 | 36 | 2,979 | 4,233 | 78 | 4,308 |
| | 2022 | 57 | 9 | 66 | 933 | 24 | 957 | 2,523 | 51 | 2,574 | 3,513 | 87 | 3,597 |
| Emergency Benefit | 2019 | 9 | 0 | 12 | 48 | 0 | 45 | 114 | 3 | 120 | 174 | 6 | 177 |
| | 2020 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 6 | 39 | 90 | 3 | 90 | 129 | 9 | 138 |
| | 2021 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 3 | 33 | 102 | 0 | 102 | 135 | 3 | 135 |
| | 2022 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 21 | 0 | 21 | 84 | 3 | 87 | 108 | 3 | 108 |
| Jobseeker Support Related | 2019 | 708 | 18 | 723 | 3,717 | 21 | 3,738 | 7,395 | 54 | 7,452 | 11,820 | 93 | 11,913 |
| | 2020 | 222 | 45 | 264 | 3,249 | 93 | 3,342 | 7,170 | 117 | 7,287 | 10,641 | 252 | 10,893 |
| | 2021 | 210 | 42 | 252 | 3,408 | 90 | 3,501 | 8,193 | 138 | 8,328 | 11,811 | 273 | 12,084 |
| | 2022 | 108 | 18 | 123 | 2,004 | 81 | 2,085 | 5,394 | 120 | 5,514 | 7,503 | 216 | 7,722 |

| Benefit Group / Calendar Year | | SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION FEES, EXAMINATION FEES | | | SCHOOL STATIONERY | | | SCHOOL UNIFORMS | | | Total | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|--|----------|--|-------------------|----------|--|-----------------|----------|--|--------|----------|--|
| | | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) | Grants | Declines | Applications Processed (Grants + Declines) |
| Non-Beneficiary | 2019 | 174 | 27 | 204 | 1,017 | 51 | 1,068 | 2,325 | 132 | 2,457 | 3,513 | 213 | 3,729 |
| | 2020 | 72 | 18 | 90 | 759 | 54 | 813 | 1,908 | 141 | 2,049 | 2,739 | 213 | 2,952 |
| | 2021 | 48 | 15 | 63 | 480 | 54 | 534 | 1,434 | 150 | 1,587 | 1,962 | 222 | 2,184 |
| | 2022 | 63 | 6 | 69 | 624 | 15 | 639 | 1,908 | 42 | 1,950 | 2,595 | 63 | 2,658 |
| Jobseeker Student Hardship | 2019 | 33 | 3 | 33 | 210 | 3 | 213 | 333 | 3 | 336 | 579 | 3 | 582 |
| | 2020 | 12 | 0 | 9 | 153 | 3 | 156 | 288 | 3 | 291 | 453 | 6 | 456 |
| | 2021 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 93 | 3 | 93 | 210 | 6 | 213 | 303 | 6 | 309 |
| | 2022 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 45 | 0 | 45 | 135 | 0 | 135 | 186 | 0 | 183 |
| Sole Parent Support | 2019 | 1,815 | 51 | 1,866 | 10,851 | 60 | 10,914 | 20,556 | 96 | 20,652 | 33,225 | 207 | 33,429 |
| | 2020 | 600 | 54 | 654 | 9,477 | 228 | 9,705 | 19,464 | 231 | 19,695 | 29,541 | 510 | 30,054 |
| | 2021 | 477 | 60 | 537 | 8,868 | 243 | 9,114 | 20,580 | 333 | 20,913 | 29,925 | 639 | 30,564 |
| | 2022 | 297 | 39 | 336 | 7,419 | 255 | 7,671 | 19,965 | 426 | 20,394 | 27,678 | 720 | 28,398 |
| Youth Payment / Young Parent Payment | 2019 | 42 | 3 | 48 | 36 | 3 | 36 | 102 | 3 | 105 | 183 | 6 | 186 |
| | 2020 | 15 | 3 | 18 | 24 | 3 | 21 | 84 | 12 | 96 | 123 | 15 | 135 |
| | 2021 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 36 | 0 | 36 | 108 | 3 | 108 | 150 | 3 | 153 |
| | 2022 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 24 | 3 | 24 | 54 | 3 | 57 | 78 | 3 | 81 |
| Total | 2019 | 3,294 | 123 | 3,417 | 18,039 | 177 | 18,213 | 35,334 | 390 | 35,721 | 56,667 | 684 | 57,351 |
| | 2020 | 1,074 | 144 | 1,218 | 15,507 | 468 | 15,975 | 33,225 | 699 | 33,921 | 49,806 | 1,311 | 51,114 |
| | 2021 | 834 | 150 | 984 | 14,475 | 468 | 14,946 | 34,641 | 792 | 35,430 | 49,950 | 1,413 | 51,360 |
| | 2022 | 549 | 84 | 633 | 11,355 | 399 | 11,754 | 31,086 | 705 | 31,791 | 42,987 | 1,188 | 44,175 |

Notes:

- This table includes grants for School administration and examination fees, school stationery and school uniforms.
- This table includes Recoverable Assistance Payments and Advances. School related costs are not paid as Special Needs Grants.
- The number of grants, declines and applications processed is not the number of individuals.
- A client can have more than one grant, decline or application processed in each time period.
- The number of applications is the sum of grants and declines. Differences in the table between the number of applications listed and the sum of grants and declines is the result of applied random rounding.
- Jobseeker Support Related includes Jobseeker Support Health Condition and Disability and Jobseeker Support Work Ready.
- Supported Living Payment Related includes Supported Living Payment Health Condition and Disability and Supported Living Payment Carer.
- The Benefit Group "No Benefit" includes grants for people not in receipt of any ongoing assistance from the Ministry. The Group "Non-Beneficiary" includes clients receiving some form of ongoing supplementary assistance (for example Accommodation Supplement) from the Ministry but who are not in receipt of a Main Benefit as defined under the Social Security Act 2018.