



20 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 20 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information in reference to your response dated 11 January 2023:

- *What were the data limitations and is the revised sample of 864 part of the original sample of 1,000? Please clarify the reasons for this extra work being done.*

In response to recommendations made by Audit NZ and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG),¹ a random sample of 1,000 Wage Subsidy recipients was intended to be selected.²

As noted in the report previously provided to you: *Wage Subsidy Scheme: Audit NZ and OAG Recommendations*, dated 22 July 2021, a sample of 800 was expected but this was adjusted to 1,000 to mitigate the risk of a low response rate.

The survey that was sent out to selected recipients included a link to a declaration to indicate that the recipient met the eligibility and obligations under the Wage Subsidy Scheme.

When initial tracking of survey responses began, it was identified that the sample had erroneously included recipients based on the date they received the wage subsidy payment instead of the date that they applied for the wage subsidy. In practice, this meant that some of the sample had applied under previous wage subsidy declaration versions, not the most current declaration

¹ It was recommended that the Ministry obtain written confirmation of compliance with the schemes, which could be focused on larger employers.

² Eligible recipients included those that had applied for the Wage Subsidy Scheme from 28 March 2020 onward.

version provided in the survey.³ As a result of this, a decision was made to exclude recipients who had applied under a previous declaration.

In other cases, due to the time elapsed since receiving the subsidy in scope of the sample, some responses 'bounced back' from email addresses no longer in use – for example, where the person who submitted the application was no longer associated with the business, or where the business that received the subsidy was no longer operating or was under new ownership.

Furthermore, the contact details supplied on Wage Subsidy applications did not differentiate between those of the business and those of persons acting on behalf of the business (e.g. accountants). Where the survey was sent to persons acting on behalf of businesses, because the survey did not name the specific business applied for, a number of responses were received for companies not intended to be included in the sample including those relating to previous wage subsidy declarations applied under. However, where additional responses were for businesses which received the subsidy under the declaration linked from the survey, these were included as valid responses.

To date, a very high level of compliance with the obligations and eligibility criteria for the scheme has been confirmed by the responses received.

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.

³ At that time, the most current declaration version was as-at 4pm on 27 March 2020.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

George van Ooyen
Group General Manager
Client Service Delivery