



1 August 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 13 June 2024, requesting information about sanctions for the last 10 years, debt, and new compulsory work seminars for people receiving Jobseeker Support.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request, set out separately below.

Question 1: How many people per year for the last ten years have been sanctioned had their benefits cut for not attending work expos, training or similar events.

Please see the attached **Appendix, Table One** providing the number of sanctions for failing specific work obligations for working age main benefit clients from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2023, by calendar year and sanction reason.

Question 2: A breakdown on the benefit debt owed to the government by: length of time the client had been receiving the benefit (ranging from less than 1-5 years, 5-10 years, and 10+ years) – and how much debt is owed by all clients in each of those categories.

This level of information is unable to be provided to you. The Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as it requires substantial collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Question 3: Of the current debt owed to the government by people receiving benefits, what proportion of the debt is held by people receiving Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support, and the Supported Living Payment, broken down by each of these categories?

Please see the attached **Appendix, Table Two** providing the number of current clients and amount of current debt owed as at 31 March 2024, by benefit type.

Question 4: What, if any, will be the cost of sanctions resulting from the introduction of compulsory work seminars?

The Ministry does not forecast the number of sanctions expected. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Question 5: When and where will new compulsory work seminars for people receiving Jobseeker Support take place over the next 12 months, listed by date and location?

The Ministry has introduced Kōrero Mahi – Let's Talk Work seminars. All clients who have full-time work obligations and are new to receiving a benefit will be required to attend a Kōrero Mahi – Let's Talk Work seminar, within the first two weeks of receiving benefit payments. For people who have been receiving Jobseeker Support for 26 weeks, they will also be required to attend a formalised check-in seminar.


It is important to note that as these seminars can be set up on an as-needed basis and are responsive to regional demand, the Ministry does not hold data of when and where seminars will be held over the next 12 months. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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. 

Magnus O'Neill

**General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services**