



15 March 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your emails dated 26 February 2024, in which you requested data and information about the Steps to Freedom grant (STF) for each calendar year since 2016.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision set out below.

1.) The number of individuals each year to receive the Steps to Freedom grant

This data is included in **Table 1** of **APPENDIX 1**.

2.) The number of individuals each year to receive the Steps to Freedom grant more than once in the year

This data is included in **Table 2** of **APPENDIX 2**.

3.) The average amount paid out each year through the Steps to Freedom grant

This data is included in **Table 1** of **APPENDIX 1**.

4.) The total paid out each year through the Steps to Freedom grant

This data is included in **Table 1** of **APPENDIX 1**.

5.) Any advice provided to Government ministers since 2020 on changes to the Steps to Freedom grant, including increasing the grant

As you know, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) partially transferred this part of your request to the Department of Corrections (Corrections) on 29 February 2024, in accordance with section 14(b)(ii) of the Act. This is because the Ministry believes that Corrections may hold information within scope of the request which is more closely related with the functions of that agency.

I refer you to **APPENDIX 2**, which includes document excerpts that feature advice from agency officials, regarding the STF, that have been provided to Ministers since 2020.

Please note that only the parts of the documents included in **APPENDIX 2** which include advice provided by agency officials to Ministers regarding the STF have been provided with this response, as excerpts, under section 16(1)(e) of the Act.

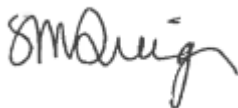
You will note that the excerpts refer to an increase to the STF. The previous Government did not increase the grant. It remained at its current rate.

I will publish 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

pp. 

Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

APPENDIX 2 – Document excerpts

20200319 – Re-orienting the Budget 2020 Income Support Package - REP/20/3/265 (excerpt)

- 9 Steps to Freedom grant (for people released from prison) will also be increased. This provides up to \$250 additional per grant, or \$329 on average per person for an estimated 9,300 people.

20200402 – Joint Ministerial meeting on Income Support – Thursday 2 April 2020 (excerpts)

Joint Ministerial meeting on Income Support – Thursday 2 April 2020 9am

This note supplements recent advice from officials to Ministers on income support options to address income adequacy in the context of COVID-19 and the Government's broader Welfare Overhaul.

Attachment #3: Other Welfare Overhaul options for Budget 2020 [replaces appendix in 19 March report]

The table below provides updated implementation timeframes for the Budget 2020 proposals to reflect delays in implementation due to additional organisational pressures as a result of COVID-19.

ID	Initiative Name	Cost	Rationale	Link to COVID response	Updated timeframe
12036	Increasing re-establishment grants	\$5.6m p.a.	Increases other re-establishment grants to be in line with the change to refugee re-establishment grants (e.g. Steps to Freedom grant and domestic violence)	n/a	1 February 2021

20200403 – Memo: Status of key policy work items to Hon Sepuloni's office (excerpts)

- 1 The table below provides updated implementation timeframes for the Budget 2020 proposals to reflect delays in implementation due to additional organisational pressures as a result of COVID-19. It only includes on initiatives that MSD would be responsible for implementing.

Initiative name	Cost	Rationale	Updated timeframe
Increasing re-establishment grants	\$5.6m p.a.	Increases other re-establishment grants to be in line with the change to refugee re-establishment grants (e.g. Steps to Freedom grant and domestic violence)	1 February 2021 (unchanged)