



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

28 NOV 2016

On 17 October 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many New Zealand residents and citizens subject to deductions under Section 70 of the Social Security Act 1964, have (a) applied for, (b) been subsequently granted, and (c) been subsequently refused, either supplementary payments and/or repayable loans for items such as spectacles, teeth, medical expenses and household expenses in each of the years for which records exist?*
- *Are NZ migrants from the UK expected to contact the Department of Social Security in the UK when they need these items?*

Section 70 of the Social Security Act 1964 requires a person's and/or their partner's rate of New Zealand benefit or pension to be reduced where an overseas benefit or pension is:

- part of a programme that provides benefits, pensions and periodical allowances for the similar circumstances for which New Zealand benefits, pensions and periodical allowances would be paid (for example old age and retirement); and
- administered by, or on behalf of, an overseas government

The policy intent of section 70 is to ensure that those entitled to a New Zealand benefit or pension are treated equitably and receive the same level of government retirement support whether solely through a New Zealand benefit or pension, through a combination of overseas pension and a New Zealand benefit or pension or through the overseas pension. Were it not for section 70, those who have lived, and worked, in overseas countries may be entitled to a greater overall level of government retirement support than those who had solely resided, and worked, in New Zealand.

I can advise you that there are 77,268 clients residing in New Zealand who are in receipt of an overseas pension and subject to a deduction under section 70 of the Social Security Act 1964.

In the 2015/16 financial year, the Ministry received 3,889 applications for hardship assistance. Of those applications, 212 were declined and 3,677 were approved. It is important to note that this is a count of applications received and not individuals. A single individual may have multiple grants and declines. Hardship assistance can be

considered for a range of reasons, including spectacles, teeth, medical expenses and certain household expenses.

Your request for this information from the inception and application of section 70 of the Social Security Act 1964 and information about what the hardship grant was granted for is located on notes in individual's case files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. For the 2015/16 year alone, Ministry staff would need to review over 3,889 applications to locate and collate the information to the level of detail you have asked. 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 request 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.

Recipients of New Zealand assistance subject to a deduction under section 70 of the Social Security Act 1964 are not expected to apply to the UK authorities for assistance for other items, for example spectacles. They make inquiries about eligibility with Work and Income in New Zealand.

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 after ten working days. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development'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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bound  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery**