



17 AUG 2017

Dear

On 15 June 2017 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *If someone is unable to afford a GP visit and is eligible for Work and Income hardship assistance, is the SNG/voucher and the advanced payment of benefit the only forms of assistance that someone receives for these or other there other forms? Please provide a list of all eligible assistance for covering GP visits and prescription costs – I am assuming its SNG and advance payment of benefit but just want to check I am not missing anything (excluding pharmaceutical subsidy card)*
- *What reasons are recorded for the issuing of assistance for GP and prescription costs other than 'health', are there more granular reasons recorded for the issuing of hardship assistance by work and income for GP visits and prescription costs below just 'health' for any of the assistance types? Please provide all that reasons recorded for each assistance type that covers GP fees and/or prescription costs*
- *If so, can I please have the number of grants and amount each financial year (for the earliest year available) broken down by the reasons provided in question two? And broken down by assistance type?*
- *Are client numbers recorded or just grants? If so please provide number of recipients broken down as asked for in question 3*
- *How many of these grants have children associated with the recipient? (broken down again as asked for in question 3)*

The Ministry of Social Development provides a number of payments to assist with medical costs such as Special Needs Grants, Disability Allowance, Child Disability Allowance and Temporary Additional Support.

Special Needs Grants provide a one-off, non-taxable payment, to assist clients with meeting an immediate essential need including medical treatment. Special Needs Grants paid to assist with medical costs are broken down into the following four categories; Doctors' Fees, Prescription Charges, Long Acting Reversible Contraception and Vasectomies. Table 1 shows the number and amount of Special Needs Grants paid under the categories Doctors' Fees and Prescription Charges broken down by cost code and year, from 2007 to 2017.

The Disability Allowance is a weekly payment for people who have regular, ongoing costs because of a disability, such as visits to the doctor or hospital, medicines, extra clothing or travel. Clients may be able to receive assistance for the costs of medical alarm rental and monitoring where the need for a medical alarm is ongoing and directly related to the client's disability. Tables 2, 3 and 4 show the number of Disability Allowance grants and weekly amounts claimed under the categories Medical Fees and Prescription Charges for primary caregivers, partners of caregivers and children respectively. The figures shown are as at the final week of June from 2007 to 2017.

Child Disability Allowance may be granted to the principle caregiver of a child with a serious disability. This payment is in recognition of the extra care that may be needed by a child who has a physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual disability. Table 5 shows the number and weekly amount of Child Disability Allowances paid as at the final week of June from 2007 to 2017.

In addition, some clients may have Temporary Additional Support payments to assist with essential costs which they are unable to cover; these costs may include medical related expenses.

Temporary Additional Support may include a number of different costs in a single payment and cannot be broken down to show exactly what was paid to cover medical expenses. Therefore the number of grants paid, and the amount paid under Temporary Additional Support solely for medical related costs, is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry is unable to provide the number of children associated with the Special Needs Grants paid under medical categories as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. 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.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

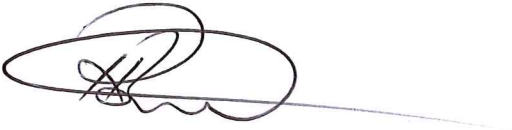
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding assistance paid by the Ministry to help with General Practitioner 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ruth Bound', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery

Table 1: The number and amount of Special Needs Grants granted under cost code 'Doctors Fees' and 'Prescription Charges', as at the end of June from 2007 to 2017.

As at June	Emergency medical treatment category – Doctors Fees		Emergency medical treatment category – Prescription Charges		Total	
	Number of grants	Total amount granted	Number of grants	Total amount granted	Number	Total amount granted
2007	8,115	\$738,650	2,964	\$166,466	11,079	\$905,116
2008	8,740	\$790,797	3,052	\$174,039	11,792	\$964,836
2009	10,371	\$927,421	3,300	\$184,183	13,671	\$1,111,604
2010	10,974	\$938,546	3,274	\$176,901	14,248	\$1,115,447
2011	7,681	\$665,381	2,500	\$137,471	10,181	\$802,852
2012	5,575	\$507,442	1,454	\$82,091	7,029	\$589,533
2013	4,698	\$455,145	1,623	\$80,618	6,321	\$535,762
2014	3,833	\$378,237	1,930	\$92,331	5,763	\$470,568
2015	3,696	\$348,368	1,878	\$88,820	5,574	\$437,188
2016	3,835	\$371,665	1,865	\$90,850	5,700	\$462,516
2017	4,797	\$471,476	2,170	\$108,554	6,967	\$580,030

Note:

- Table includes grants to clients of all ages.
- This is a count of grants, not clients. The same client may have received multiple grants within the same period.

Table 2: The number of Disability Allowances claims for 'Medical Fees' and 'Prescription Costs' and the associated weekly costs claimed by clients as at 30 June, each year between 2007 and 2017.

As at June	Medical Fees		Prescription Charges		Total number of Disability Allowances received claiming one or more medical cost as at 30 June
	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	
2007	201,592	\$828,795	182,118	\$550,717	207,886
2008	204,516	\$852,176	183,651	\$548,127	210,647
2009	214,087	\$911,439	189,767	\$577,637	220,644
2010	221,504	\$961,832	194,394	\$581,052	228,262
2011	220,721	\$976,029	192,873	\$544,152	227,166
2012	217,567	\$985,862	189,290	\$513,731	223,567
2013	215,341	\$987,411	187,707	\$504,369	221,383
2014	213,617	\$999,140	187,568	\$516,027	219,737
2015	214,056	\$1,009,502	187,863	\$518,718	220,309
2016	211,765	\$1,013,777	185,950	\$519,669	217,939
2017	210,821	\$1,023,041	184,718	\$510,082	216,945

Note:

- A Disability Allowance application may include both Prescription Charges and Medical Fees costs. Hence the same Disability Allowance may appear under the count for 'medical fees' and also be counted again under the count of 'prescription charges'.
- The "weekly amount claimed" is for the last week of the corresponding month.
- This includes Disability Allowance paid to all ages.
- A small number of costs codes under an old code "medical costs" are regrouped as "Medical Fees".

Table 3: The number of Disability Allowances claims for 'Medical Fees' and 'Prescription Costs' and the associated weekly costs claimed by a partner of a client as at 30 June, each year between 2007 and 2017.

As at June	Medical Fees		Prescription Charges		Total number of Disability Allowances received claiming one or more medical cost as at 30 June
	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	
2007	5,389	\$19,884	4,882	\$11,684	5,576
2008	5,316	\$19,355	4,780	\$11,609	5,503
2009	5,412	\$20,605	4,820	\$11,352	5,612
2010	5,707	\$21,635	4,996	\$11,596	5,917
2011	5,354	\$20,345	4,702	\$10,424	5,545
2012	4,857	\$19,199	4,202	\$9,007	5,019
2013	4,619	\$18,243	3,992	\$8,502	4,788
2014	4,492	\$18,509	3,875	\$9,103	4,665
2015	4,452	\$18,848	3,838	\$9,157	4,618
2016	4,240	\$17,985	3,643	\$8,058	4,403
2017	4,055	\$17,508	3,480	\$7,938	4,214

Note:

- A Disability Allowance application may include both Prescription Charges and Medical Fees costs. Hence the same Disability Allowance may appear under the count for 'medical fees' and also be counted again under the count of 'prescription charges'.
- The "weekly amount claimed" is for the last week of the corresponding month.
- This includes Disability Allowance paid to all ages.
- A small number of costs codes under an old code "medical costs" are regrouped as "Medical Fees".

Table 4: The number of Disability Allowances claims for 'Medical Fees' and 'Prescription Costs' and the associated weekly costs claimed by a client on behalf of a child as at 30 June, each year between 2007 and 2017.

As at June	Medical Fees		Prescription Charges		Total number of Disability Allowances received claiming one or more medical cost as at 30 June
	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	Number	Weekly Amount Claimed	
2007	6,618	\$17,411	6,736	\$21,193	8,579
2008	6,467	\$18,151	6,432	\$22,583	8,316
2009	6,836	\$20,034	6,835	\$21,896	8,910
2010	7,028	\$20,497	6,923	\$21,867	9,177
2011	6,696	\$20,457	6,512	\$21,632	8,680
2012	6,208	\$19,973	5,810	\$20,528	7,921
2013	5,548	\$18,310	5,193	\$18,049	7,044
2014	5,141	\$18,129	4,854	\$17,414	6,515
2015	4,762	\$16,831	4,611	\$16,513	6,108
2016	3,642	\$13,302	3,828	\$14,857	4,997
2017	2,785	\$10,805	3,117	\$13,401	4,025

Note:

- A Disability Allowance application may include both Prescription Charges and Medical Fees costs. Hence the same Disability Allowance may appear under the count for 'medical fees' and also be counted again under the count of 'prescription charges'.
- The "weekly amount claimed" is for the last week of the corresponding month.
- This includes Disability Allowance paid to all ages.
- A small number of costs codes under an old code "medical costs" are regrouped as "Medical Fees".

Table 5: The number of Child Disability Allowance grants and total amount paid weekly as at 30 June of each year between 2007 and 2017.

As at June	Number of CDA grants	Total weekly amount paid
2007	39,145	\$1,544,258
2008	43,185	\$1,758,125
2009	45,767	\$1,926,292
2010	43,883	\$1,883,071
2011	39,253	\$1,747,592
2012	36,894	\$1,671,289
2013	34,968	\$1,594,121
2014	34,501	\$1,594,620
2015	34,589	\$1,606,805
2016	35,105	\$1,630,818
2017	35,935	\$1,688,301

Note:

- A client may receive Child Disability Allowance for more than one child.
- The "Total weekly amount paid" is for the last week of the corresponding month.