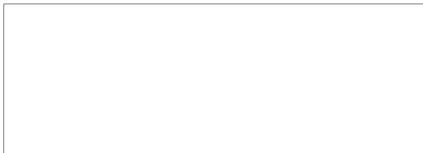




**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

28 MAR 2017



On 15 February 2017 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding hardship payments in Timaru.

Work and Income, a service line of the Ministry of Social Development, provides hardship assistance to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently.

Hardship assistance includes Advances, Recoverable Assistance Payments and Special Needs Grants:

- Advances are recoverable payments available to people receiving a main benefit who require assistance to meet a particular immediate need for an essential item.
- Recoverable Assistance Payments are recoverable financial assistance to non-beneficiaries to meet essential immediate needs for specific items or services.
- Special Needs Grants provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet immediate needs.

More information about hardship assistance is available on Work and Income's website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/how-we-can-help-you/dont-have-enough-income.html

Further information regarding benefits and hardship payments is available on the Ministry's website. The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in benefit information over the past five years. The Fact Sheets present numbers and characteristics of clients in receipt of benefits at the end of the current quarter and for the equivalent quarter one year ago and five years ago. You will note Work and Income divides New Zealand into 11 Regions. The Benefit Fact Sheets are available at: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/

- *What was the amount of the total hardship payments made from the Timaru service centre site, broken down by year, from 2012.*

Please see attached table 1, which details the number and dollar amount of hardship payments recommended by the Timaru Service Centre, broken down by payment type and year, since 2012. Please note that clients who applied for hardship

payments by remote application, for example over the phone, are not recorded by region and as such are not included in these figures.

- *How many of these clients were repeat clients in 2016 and 2015?*

Please see attached table 2, which details the number of clients with multiple payments, broken down by year since 2012. Over the last five years, an average of 76.6 per cent of clients receiving a hardship payment recommended by the Timaru Service Centre required three or fewer grants in the calendar year.

There is no limit on the amount of hardship payments that may be made to a client, however to ensure that further assistance is in the client's best interest, clients who require more than two hardship payments in a 12 month period are asked to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to improve their financial standing, such as completing a budget or seeking advice from a budgeting service. Further details on these obligations may be found on the Work and Income website under the 'How we work with you' subheading, at the following address: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/special-needs-grant.html.

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 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.

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.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive

Table 1: Number and amount of hardship payments recommended from the Timaru Service Centre from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016, broken down by year and payment type.

Calendar Year	Payment Type	Number of Payments	Amount Granted
2012	Special Needs Grant	3,745	\$487,990
	Advance of Main Benefit	2,506	\$845,437
	Recoverable Assistance Payment.	175	\$64,855
	Total	6,426	\$1,398,282
2013	Special Needs Grant	3,664	\$482,708
	Advance of Main Benefit	2,412	\$798,443
	Recoverable Assistance Payment.	225	\$86,405
	Total	6,301	\$1,367,556
2014	Special Needs Grant	3,448	\$466,770
	Advance of Main Benefit	2,338	\$758,958
	Recoverable Assistance Payment.	232	\$86,030
	Total	6,018	\$1,311,758
2015	Special Needs Grant	3,358	\$484,652
	Advance of Main Benefit	2,209	\$753,834
	Recoverable Assistance Payment.	210	\$81,994
	Total	5,777	\$1,320,480
2016	Special Needs Grant	3,553	\$521,612
	Advance of Main Benefit	2,579	\$933,577
	Recoverable Assistance Payment.	209	\$98,862
	Total	6,341	\$1,554,051

Notes:

- This is a count of payments and the same client may have received more than one payment.
- In some cases the payment may have been approved by another office.
- Clients who applied for hardship payments by remote application are not recorded by region and as such are not included in these figures.
- Numbers provided for 2012 may vary from those reported previously due to changes in business rules related to the differentiation between the approving office and recommending office.

Table 2: Number of clients recommended for hardship payments by the Timaru Service Centre from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016, broken down by year and by clients with a single recommendation in the year and clients with more than one recommendation in the year.

Calendar Year	Clients with single payment	Clients with multiple payments	Total number of clients
2012	974	1,508	2,482
2013	903	1,415	2,318
2014	830	1,387	2,217
2015	935	1,348	2,283
2016	1,027	1,461	2,488

Notes:

- This table counts Special Needs Grants, Advances of Main Benefit and Recoverable Assistance Payments as hardship payments.
- In some cases the payment may have been approved by another office.
- Clients who applied for hardship payments by remote application are not recorded by region and as such are not included in these figures.
- This does not include payments made by other sites, rather we have only included their Timaru payments.