



14 APR 2016

Dear

On 8 February 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding the Christchurch Incentive Payment.

The \$3k to Christchurch initiative was introduced from 1 July 2014 and is an 'Incentive Payment' to assist beneficiaries who have secured sustainable, full-time employment in Christchurch, to move to the Christchurch area. The financial incentive is a non-taxable payment of \$3,000 and applicants need to provide proof of a confirmed full-time job offer of at least 30 hours per week, which involves being continually employed for more than 91 days.

Applicants must meet all of the qualifying criteria to receive the \$3k to Christchurch payment. The criteria are available online at:
www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/brochures/3k-to-christchurch-factsheet.html

I have addressed each of your questions below.

- *How many people have received the Christchurch Incentive Payment of \$3000 since it was introduced in 2014?*

As at the end of January 2016, 1,890 people have received the \$3k to Christchurch payment.

- *What ages are the recipients?*

The ages of people who have received the \$3k to Christchurch payment as at the end of January 2016, are shown in the table below.

Age groups of people who have received a \$3k to Christchurch payment	
Age Group	Number of recipients
16-24	638
25-34	594
35-44	306
45-54	249
55 and over	103

- *Where in New Zealand did they move to Christchurch from?*

The table below shows the number of people who received the \$3k to Christchurch payment broken down by region as at the end of January 2016.

\$3k to Christchurch payment recipients by region	
Regions from which people applied to receive \$3k to Christchurch payment	Number
Auckland Metro	205
Bay of Plenty	182
Canterbury*	288
Central	89
East Coast	88
Nelson	284
Northland	142
Southern	259
Taranaki	81
Waikato	82
Wellington	107
Other (<i>approved through either a Contact Centre or centralised processing unit</i>)	83

*Grants identified as Canterbury are generally related to \$3k to Christchurch payment applications where the person had gone to Christchurch looking for work, and then applied for the payment within two weeks.

- *How many have since reapplied for a benefit at any time? AND How many reapplied for a benefit within 91 days of receiving the \$3000 payment?*

As at end of January 2016, 147 had moved back onto a benefit within 91 days. I am unable to provide you with the number of people who returned to benefit after 91 days as this is not standard reporting for the Ministry and would require substantial manual collation. As such I refuse your request 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.

- *How many have been prosecuted for fraudulent use of the \$3000 incentive? AND What is the current status of those prosecutions?*

The table below shows the number of \$3k to Christchurch prosecution cases that have been completed, the number successfully prosecuted and the number of reparation orders issued as at 29 January 2016.

Prosecution and reparation cases	
Number of \$3k to Christchurch payment cases which have been referred for prosecution	Number
Completed prosecutions	8
Successful prosecutions	7
Reparation orders	S

- *How many have been ordered to repay the \$3,000?*

There are two contexts through which people may be required to repay the \$3k incentive. Firstly, as indicated in the table above, seven people have been prosecuted successfully regarding their application for a \$3k to Christchurch payment. A proportion of the seven people who were prosecuted have received reparation orders to repay the \$3k payment. Reparation orders are ordered by a Judge and any changes to the reparation after it is first ordered can only be made by a Judge. As the number of people with reparation orders is five or less, the number has been suppressed (represented by S) and is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Secondly, people who legally obtained the \$3k to Christchurch payment and have then returned to benefit within 91 days, are required to repay the \$3,000 if they cannot provide a good and sufficient reason for returning to benefit. Good and sufficient reasons can include a change in family circumstances or health conditions. As at the end of January 2016, of the 147 people returning to benefit within 91 days, 47 have been required to make repayments (2.4 per cent).

- *How many remain employed in Christchurch?*

The Ministry is only required to collect information about people for the purpose of establishing their entitlement to a benefit. When a person leaves a benefit to commence employment, details such as their commencement date is recorded. However, they are under no obligation to provide their current address to the Ministry once they exit a benefit. Unless people return to benefit, there is no way the Ministry can report how many people who received a \$3k to Christchurch payment are still in Canterbury. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) as this information does not exist.

- *How many never moved to Christchurch?*

The Ministry engages with each person who reapplies for the benefit within 91 days of receiving their payment, and assesses their reason for not being in or not continuing in their Christchurch employment opportunity. Some of those who reapply for the benefit may not have moved to Christchurch, however determining the number of people who did not move to Christchurch would require substantial manual collation and review of 147 files. As such I refuse your request 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.

- *How many remain on a benefit?*

Part of the requirement for the \$3k to Christchurch payment is that all applicants have a confirmed offer of a full time job. Therefore all clients have their benefit cancelled when a \$3k to Christchurch payment is granted.

11. What is the total cost of the Christchurch Incentive Payment scheme so far?

As at the end of January 2016, the Ministry has paid \$5.7 million to clients through the \$3k to Christchurch initiative.

12. We would also like to request all Cabinet papers and briefings on the Christchurch Incentive Payment between 6 May 2014 and 7 February 2016.

Regarding your request for all Cabinet papers and briefings, I understand that you spoke with a Ministry official on 12 February 2016, and you asked to only be supplied with Cabinet papers and briefings that would further answer any of the questions in your list above. I can advise that there are no Cabinet papers or briefings that would provide answers or further information regarding any of your questions.

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

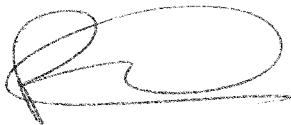
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 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.

I hope you find this information helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



 Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery