



19 APR 2016



Dear

On 2 March 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many people have been receiving the MSD disability allowance for the 12 months to March 2016 as a result of problems arising from the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011?*
- *Could the Ministry also provide general details of the individual requests during this period, including details of what the allowance was paid for and what services the individual received as a result of receiving the allowance.*

Financial assistance for counselling fees is available through a Disability Allowance if a person is eligible. Generally assistance is limited to a maximum of 10 counselling sessions on first application and a further 20 additional sessions can be approved on the recommendation of the client's medical practitioner or specialist. In exceptional circumstances Work and Income can approve further sessions. More information about the Disability Allowance can be accessed here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/community/brochures/disability-allowance-allowable-costs.htm

Information about why a person has been granted a Disability Allowance is held on case notes in individual files. As at the end of December 2015, 12,729 people in Canterbury were in receipt of a Disability Allowance. It would require significant substantial manual collation to address your request for the number of people (and the details of these individual requests) in Canterbury in last twelve months, who are receiving a Disability Allowance as a result of problems arising from the Christchurch earthquake in February 2016. As such your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act.

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.

Though it is not standard reporting, the Ministry is able to provide data concerning the number of people in Christchurch who are receiving a Disability Allowance that has a counselling cost component involved. As the details about what people are receiving counselling for is held on individual files, it cannot be assumed that this data represents people who are receiving assistance for counselling because of the Christchurch earthquakes.

Table one: The number of working age clients on a main benefit receiving a Disability Allowance that has counselling cost component as at the end December 2011 to 2015 for the Canterbury region.

Date	Disability Allowance with a counselling cost component in Canterbury region
31 December 2011	395
31 December 2012	340
31 December 2013	326
31 December 2014	269
31 December 2015	272

Please note working age includes clients between 18 to 64 years. Main benefits exclude New Zealand Superannuation, Veterans Pension, Non-Beneficiary Assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.

As you will note there has been a decline in the number of people receiving the Disability Allowance with a counselling cost component in Canterbury for the last couple of years. This aligns with a national trend that has seen an overall reduction in the number of applications received for the Disability Allowance, however the overall number of applications being granted for the last two financial years has increased. You may find the table provided in the reply to Written Parliamentary Question 996 (2016) helpful. This can be accessed here: http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/business/qwa/QWA_00996_2016/996-2016-carmel-sepuloni-to-the-minister-for-social

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 am sorry I could not be more helpful in regard to providing the number of people in Christchurch who are receiving Disability Allowance for counselling as result of Christchurch's recent earthquake. I trust you find the information helpful. If you are not satisfied, 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