



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

27 APR 2016

Dear

On 5 April 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many other beneficiaries broken down by Work and Income region have had their benefits stopped or suspended for a warrant to arrest since July 1 2013? How many of them later cleared the arrest warrants and had their benefits resumed?*

For a benefit to be suspended, a warrant to arrest for a beneficiary must have remained unresolved for 28 calendar days from the date it was issued. The client must also have had sufficient notice to clear the warrant or to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve it. The benefit will not be suspended if Work and Income is satisfied that:

- a) the client is not the person to whom the warrant applies;
- b) the client has taken all reasonable steps to resolve the warrant, but the warrant has, for reasons beyond the client's control, not been resolved; or
- c) the warrant has been resolved.

Certain clients are also excluded from the benefit sanction initiative (see section 75B(2) and the Social Security (Effect on Benefit of Warrant to Arrest – Excluded Beneficiaries) Regulations 2013).

No more than 50 per cent of the benefit payable will be stopped for clients with dependent children. For couples, payment will be stopped for the client who has the outstanding warrant to arrest; the remaining portion will still be paid to their spouse or partner.

The Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development may also immediately (without the expiry of 28 calendar days) suspend a client's benefit if he or she has received a request to do so from the Commissioner of Police on the basis that the beneficiary poses a risk to public safety (section 75B(7)).

More information regarding the Ministry's policy in relation to warrants to arrest is available on Work and Income's Manuals and Procedures website at www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/warrant-to-arrest/.

You will find enclosed two tables showing the number of benefits suspended due to a warrant to arrest, broken down by Work and Income region from the 2013/14 financial year to December 2015, and the total number of warrants to arrest cleared,

broken down by Work and Income region, from the financial year 2013/14 to December 2015. As the data provided shows, the majority of those who have a warrant to arrest, clear it within 28 days and do not see their benefit suspended.

The Ministry is unable to report on whether any of the other 2,411 benefits that were suspended due to an outstanding warrant to arrest as shown in table one were reinstated. In order to obtain this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review each of the 2,411 individual files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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 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

Table one: Number of benefits suspended due to a warrant to arrest by Work and Income region:

Region	Financial year 2013/14	Financial year 2014/15	Financial year 2015/16 to December 2015
Northland	115	94	57
Auckland Metro	328	339	218
Waikato	84	77	55
Taranaki	24	29	15
Bay of Plenty	74	87	57
East Coast	47	53	37
Central	56	80	27
Wellington	51	65	49
Nelson	18	20	7
Canterbury	51	63	37
Southern	26	25	9
Other	28	24	7
Grand Total	902	956	575

Note:

- Financial year 2015/16 only contains the first two quarters
- This is a count of suspensions, not a count of clients.
- Clients may be counted more than once.

Table two: The number of Warrants to Arrest cleared, broken down by Work and Income region:

Region	Financial year 2013/14	Financial year 2014/15	Financial year 2015/16 to December 2015
Unknown	609	957	577
Northland	432	329	234
Auckland Metro	1,372	1,400	757
Waikato	306	276	192
Taranaki	80	102	75
Bay of Plenty	253	307	217
East Coast	190	269	204
Central	158	220	132
Wellington	221	241	192
Nelson	39	76	26
Canterbury	209	227	139
Southern	50	43	27
Other	98	73	31
Grand Total	4,017	4,520	2,803

Note:

- Financial year 2015/16 only contains the first two quarters
- This is a count of suspensions, not a count of clients.
- Clients may be counted more than once.