



13 JAN 2021

On 16 November 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

The amount MSD has spent with My Food Bag in the last 15 months.

Since August 2019, the Ministry has spent \$301,404.48 (GST exclusive) on My Food Bag Ltd. This spending was used for both the Bargain Box Emergency Food Kit in Auckland and as part of a COVID-19 relief approach.

As you might be aware, from October 2019 to February 2020, the Ministry partnered with Bargain Box (My Food Bag Ltd) to trial the Emergency Food Kit in Auckland. This voluntary trial offered families the choice between money on a payment card or the Emergency Food Kit. The Ministry recognises for some families getting access to affordable and nutritious food can be difficult. This is particularly true for those without access to transport or supermarkets.

The proposed Emergency Food Kit, which was developed through co-design workshops held with clients in 2017, included everything needed for breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner for seven days.

Before commencing the trial, the Ministry tested the food kit with 101 families to find out how the product worked for them in their home. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with 95% of clients rating their experience as 'good' or 'very good'.

Clients who had an emergency need for food in Clendon and Manukau Service Centres had the option to receive the food kit, or choose to receive money on their payment card. The trial was offered to clients applying for Special Needs Grants for food in Clendon and Manukau Service Centres only.

A more fulsome evaluation of the trial has been superseded due to the Ministry's work demands arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, food banks and community groups in Auckland were under urgent pressure to provide food to increased numbers of people. During this time, and alongside other initiatives and funding provided to meet immediate food needs during lockdown, the Ministry funded the distribution of 500 'Back Up Boxes' from My Food Bag Ltd. These 'Back Up Boxes' were distributed to food banks and community groups in Auckland to help meet this immediate need. The 'Back Up Box' was a customised box containing non-perishables for seven days of breakfast, lunch and dinner.

To find out more about how the Ministry is supporting New Zealand's food security, you can find more information about the Ministry's Food Secure Community Work Programme at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/food-secure-communities/index.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. 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 reading how much has been spent with My Food Bag, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Jayne Russell

**Group General Manager, Employment
Service Delivery**