



3 August 2023

Tēnā koe

On 30 June 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Hello, I am [redacted] and I would like to double-check if WINZ is involved at all prior to a prisoner being released from prison in Australia and immediately deported to New Zealand?*

Work and Income are not involved prior to a prisoner being released from prison in Australia who is then immediately deported to New Zealand. However, once in New Zealand, the deportee can receive support from Work and Income as detailed below.

The Ministry offers support to people who have been deported to New Zealand, including people who have been in prison. People who have been deported to New Zealand under Section 501 of the Australian Migration Act (1958), are entitled to the same support that is available to any New Zealander who is reintegrating into the community upon release from prison.

The Department of Corrections is the lead Government agency responsible for managing deportees and will work with them upon their return to ensure they are suitably supported. More information about that support is available here: [FAQs for Returning Offenders | Department of Corrections](#)

Once deportees have returned to New Zealand, they may be eligible for a Steps to Freedom grant. The Steps to Freedom grant is a non-recoverable grant payable under the Social Security Act 2018. Its purpose is to provide people with financial assistance for their re-establishment costs in the community, after they have been in prison or held in custody for 31 days or more. The amount paid is calculated according to the client's re-establishment costs, up to the maximum payment of \$350, less any money an inmate has on their release from prison (this includes any amount held in the client's trust account, canteen account and earnings account). The requirement for the amount paid to take into account any money an inmate has is set out in delegated legislation (the Special Needs Grants Programme).

Through our Work and Income offices we can test clients' entitlement to a main benefit (such as Jobseeker Support), work with the client to support their job search, assess the client for social housing, help with living expenses, e.g., power, a phone connection or food, and other essential costs, e.g., bedding, clothing appliances or toiletry items. You can find more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/lost-job/deported-to-new-zealand.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'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 regarding Work and Income involvement prior to prisoner deportation to New Zealand, 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

Bridget Saunders

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**Manager Service Delivery
Issues Resolution**