



16 August 2023

Tēnā koe

On 19 July 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Do WINZ/MSD require that clients provide a letter of support/script from their regular GP, in addition to scripts from cannabis clinics?*
- *Are WINZ/MSD permitted to ask clients to provide a letter of support/script from their regular GP, in addition to a script from a cannabis clinic?*

Prescriptions for medicinal cannabis are considered by the Ministry as non-subsidised pharmaceuticals. More information on non-subsidised pharmaceuticals can be found here: workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/non-subsidised-pharmaceuticals-01.html.

The costs of the non-subsidised pharmaceutical can be included as an additional expense for Disability Allowance if the client's usual general practitioner (GP) or nurse practitioner verifies the pharmaceutical item is essential, directly related to the client's disability, and there are no suitable subsidised or partly subsidised alternatives.

The health practitioner will also need to confirm the reasons for prescribing the pharmaceutical item, if PHARMAC funding has been applied for and declined and the reasons for this, or the reasons PHARMAC funding has not been sought.

In New Zealand, under Section 29 of the Medicines Act 1981, a medicinal cannabis product must be prescribed by a medical practitioner registered to practice in New Zealand. The Ministry may therefore seek additional information to ensure that the prescribing practice meets these legal requirements.

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 non-subsidised pharmaceuticals, 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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