



6 January 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 18 November 2025 requesting information about the Special Needs Grant (SNG) for food.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Please find my decision on each part of your request set out below.

- 1. What date was the amount of the Special Needs Grants for Food last increased from the rates below?*

The current maximum SNG food grant rates were introduced on 4 August 2008 and have not increased since this date.

Please note that front line staff may exercise discretion to exceed food grant maxima when the client has exceptional circumstances. Further information about exceptional circumstances is available at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/exceptional-circumstances-01.html.

- 2. What were the income limits for different types of households for accessing Special Needs Grants for Food at the date of the last increase?*

The income threshold criteria to qualify for an SNG food grant, as at 4 August 2008, are set out on the Ministry's Manuals and Procedures (MAP) website at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/special-needs-grant-tables/at-1-april-2008-03.html.

- 3. How many times have income limits increased since that time, and by what total percentage?*

Income limit increases

The income threshold criteria for an SNG food grant have increased on 1 April each year, as part of the Annual General Adjustment (AGA). The AGA is when benefits and most other financial supports provided by the Ministry are adjusted to account for the cost of living (inflation).

You can find a full list of the income threshold increases that have occurred over the years at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/special-needs-grant-tables/income-limits-current.html.

In the list of previous rates, you will see there was a temporary increase in income threshold rates from 1 November 2021, to assist low-income workers during the extended COVID-19 restrictions. You can find more information about this here: www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-extends-hardship-assistance-low-income-workers.

A permanent increase in the income threshold limits also took place as part of Budget 2022. You can read more about this here: www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-lifts-14000-children-out-poverty

Total percentage income limit increase

Between 1 April 2008 and 1 April 2025, income limits for each type of household have increased by 103.1%.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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

pp.



Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services