



22 SEP 2016

Dear

On 9 August 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information relating to the \$3k to Christchurch incentive payment:

- *How many people have taken up pay-to-move plan?*
- *How many applications have been denied?*
- *What different occupations have people who have received grant entered?*
- *How many breaches have there been of the grants conditions? (For example, accepting the grant but not moving to Christchurch.)*
- *What action has been taken as a result of breaches to the grants conditions? (Please detail action taken, if any.)*

The \$3k to Christchurch initiative was introduced from 1 July 2014 and is an 'Incentive Payment' to assist beneficiaries who have secured sustainable, full-time employment in Christchurch, to move to the Christchurch area. The financial incentive is a non-taxable payment of \$3,000 and applicants need to provide proof of a confirmed full-time job offer of at least 30 hours per week, which involves being continually employed for more than 91 days.

Applicants must meet all of the qualifying criteria to receive the \$3k to Christchurch payment. The criteria are available online at:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/brochures/3k-to-christchurch-factsheet.html

I have addressed each of your questions below.

- *How many people have taken up pay-to-move plan?*

As at the end of June 2016, 2,085 clients have received the \$3k to Christchurch payment.

- *How many applications have been denied?*

At the beginning of the \$3k to Christchurch initiative a manual spread sheet was developed to capture information about applications including the number that were declined. The spread sheet was initially able to be managed manually due to low application numbers however as numbers increased this was no longer possible. As

such the Ministry is no longer able to report the number of applications declined for the \$3k to Christchurch payment as this information is held on individual files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of files. Your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information 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.

- *What different occupations have people who have received grant entered?*

The Ministry is unable to provide the occupations that people have entered into after receiving the \$3k to Christchurch payment. I can however advise that the industries people have entered include construction, manufacturing, transport, retail and agriculture.

- *How many breaches have there been of the grants conditions? (For example, accepting the grant but not moving to Christchurch.)*
- *What action has been taken as a result of breaches to the grants conditions? (Please detail action taken, if any.)*

The Ministry may require repayment of the \$3k payment in cases where the person reapplies for benefit within 91 days of starting employment without a good and sufficient reason, and the conditions for imposing a 13-week non-entitlement period may apply; or leaves employment within 91 days without a good and sufficient reason to begin study; or where the payment is not used for the purpose for which it was paid. Examples of good and sufficient reasons for ceasing employment may include, but are not limited to, a change in family circumstances or health conditions.

In cases where we suspect fraudulent activity, our specialist fraud investigation staff will take action, which can include prosecution where clear evidence of fraud exists.

As at the end of June 2016, 164 people have returned to benefit within 91 days, and 51 have been required to make repayments. As at the same date, 15 people have been found to have not used the \$3k to Christchurch payment for the purpose for which it was paid. Of these, eight people have been prosecuted successfully of which a portion were sentenced to pay reparation orders. As the number of people with reparation orders is five or less, it cannot be released and is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

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.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Bound', written in a cursive style.

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery