



19 May 2023

Patrick Shonakan
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Tēnā koe Patrick Shonakan

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

Question 1: The complete dataset of the COVID-19 wage subsidies? Or;

Question 2: Could you please complete the excel attached?

On 12 April 2023, the Ministry contacted you to advise that completing the Excel spreadsheet included as part of your request and providing the dates of payments made would require substantial manual collation.

As such, the Ministry requested refinement of your request in order to assist us in providing you with the most helpful information, and provided you with a previous OIA response as an example of the information that we are able to provide.

On 19 April 2023 you responded to the Ministry's refinement. As outlined to you in the Ministry's follow up email on 20 April 2023, as per section 15(1AA) of the Act your amended or clarified request will be treated as a new request that replaces that original request, restarting the statutory response period.

The Ministry will now respond to your refined request for:

Question 1: Is there a secondary data set that contains information on companies that have paid their subsidies back to MSD and how much was paid back?

Question 2: If yes, would you be able to provide this information alongside the complete data set of the COVID-19 wage subsidies? Or;

Question 3: If no, would you be able to provide just the complete data set of the COVID-19 wage subsidies? Or;

Question 4: Could you please complete the excel attached?

In regards to the dates of payments made, the Institute acknowledges that multiple payments may have been made across multiple dates

and as a result, could require substantial collation. As stated above, we aim to produce as complete of a data set as possible, so we do not mind collating this information if it is available.

Question 5: Is the information regarding dates of payments made by both MSD to companies and by companies back to MSD recorded and available?

Question 6: If yes, would you be able to either provide this information or direct us to where this information can be found?

The Wage Subsidy Scheme has enabled rapid support for thousands of New Zealand businesses during a time of uncertainty and ensured that employees were able to remain connected with their employers during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The scheme was set up on a high-trust model in order to quickly deliver funds to support workers, families and businesses.

The Ministry developed an online search tool with close involvement from the Privacy Commissioner to ensure compliance with the Privacy Act 2020. Employers with fewer than three employees were omitted from the search tool to protect the privacy of employees and employers of small businesses. The aim of the search tool is not to identify individual persons who received the wage subsidy, and the protection of privacy for natural persons outweighs the public interest for this information. The online search tool can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2020/covid-19/covid-19-wage-subsidy-employer-search.html

Please note that the Ministry is not able to provide you with the dates of the payments made and dates of amount refunded for the wage subsidy schemes. The Ministry is also not able to provide you with information in the format required on the Excel spreadsheet that you have provided. The data is not currently formatted in a way to meet the needs of your request without significant manual collation. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the 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.

Please find enclosed the dataset which sits behind the online search tool. This dataset includes the list of businesses and payments for wage subsidy schemes as at 31 March 2023.

Please note the following details regarding the dataset provided:

- The dataset may not include accurate figures for businesses that have made repayments, as this information may take 2-3 working days to update.
- The information is accurate as at 31 March 2023. Changes may have been made since this date, including the aforementioned points.
- Business names are the names given by employers on the Wage Subsidy application. Businesses may be known by, or operate under, different names.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

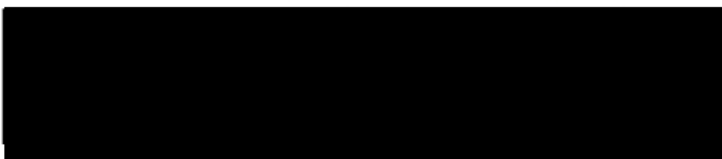
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 and attachments 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 wage subsidies, 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



**Group General Manager
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