



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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- 6 JUL 2012

Brendon Steen
fyi-request-354-2fa7f793@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Steen

Thank you for your email of 11 June 2012 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

*"(1) How many people received Student Allowance payments (including the Accommodation Benefit) in each of the past three years (2011, 2010, 2009)?
(1A) What was the total dollar value of those payments, over the three years?
(2) What percentage of the people identified in (1) were studying towards a post-graduate qualification (including post-graduate diplomas, masters degrees and doctorates; but excluding undergraduate honours programmes), in each of the three years?
(2B) What was the total dollar value of the payments referred to in (2)?
(3) What percentage of the people identified in (1) were studying towards an undergraduate qualification at either the degree, graduate diploma, or undergraduate honours level, in each of the three years?
(3B) What was the total dollar value of the payments referred to in (3)?
(4) What percentage of the people identified in (1) were studying towards qualifications other than those referred to in (2) or (3), in each of the three years?
(4B) What was the total dollar value of the payments referred to in (4)?"*

StudyLink connects students with financial assistance for a range of situations. This includes help with health, accommodation, work, childcare, and training costs. There is also help if students cannot find work during the study break, help for people with disabilities, help for emergencies, and information about family assistance.

You may be aware that on 24 May 2012 the Government announced changes to Student Loans and Student Allowances that will come into effect for study that starts on or after 1 January 2013. The changes are:

- The Student Allowance will no longer be available for postgraduate study (except Bachelor degrees with honours).
- Exemptions to the 200 week lifetime limit for Student Allowance will be removed.
- The current Student Allowance parental income threshold of \$55,027.96 will be maintained without CPI adjustment until 31 March 2016.

- Pilot training students will be limited to borrowing up to \$35,000 per Equivalent Full-time Student (EFTS) from the compulsory fees component of the Student Loan.
- Student Loan borrowing will be limited to two EFTS of study each year.

Prior to the changes, a student may have been able to get the Student Allowance beyond 200 weeks for tertiary study if:

- they are enrolled in a Recognised Long Programme. They must be studying the last qualification that forms the long programme and can not have received a Student Allowance for any course other than those that form the long programme; or
- they are retraining towards getting a job in a recognised National Interest programme. Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary teaching are currently the only programmes approved under this criterion; or
- they have approval from the Ministry of Education for their programme to be included in the 'National Interest - Retraining for Employment' provision of the regulations; or
- they are completing a programme that has been approved by the Ministry of Education as being the equivalent of an existing recognised long programme; or
- they need extra time to finish because of special circumstances.

All exemptions to the 200 week limit for Student Allowance will be removed from 1 January 2013. This includes Recognised Long Programmes and retraining for National Interest. Students with an exemption approved for study that starts prior to 1 January 2013 will continue to be eligible. Students can only apply for an exemption in 2012 if their 200 week limit will be reached in 2012. Students may be eligible to extend their Student Allowance beyond the 200 week limit if they have special circumstances outside of their control.

With regards to your request, the table below provides the number of Student Allowances and Accommodation Benefits paid broken down by calendar years (2009 to 2011) and qualifications.

Qualification level	2009		2010		2011	
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number	Amount
Unspecified	276	\$1,899,982	384	\$2,660,565	581	\$3,773,167
Other levels	22,220	\$121,709,249	25,540	\$142,432,367	26,395	\$149,589,582
Post-graduate and above	4,014	\$29,240,056	4,956	\$36,383,537	5,174	\$38,064,180
Under graduate (including those with honours)	56,128	\$387,212,072	65,068	\$456,085,165	67,127	\$477,825,738
Total	82,638	\$540,061,360	95,948	\$637,561,634	99,277	\$669,252,666

I hope you find this information on Student Allowance payments helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsmen
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iona Holsted', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Iona Holsted
Deputy Chief Executive Students Seniors and Integrity Services