



22 March 2024

Don Thompson

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Tēnā koe Don Thompson

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 28 February 2024, requesting data and information regarding calls to Ministry contact centres. I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on your request set out below. For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your request in parts.

1) *Please advise how many calls to the Work and Income Call Centre 0800 number (0800 559 009) have been presented with the above message in the twelve months from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2024, broken down into monthly numbers, divided into specific phone queues, for all queues that use this system (e.g. General enquiry queue, hardship assistance queue).*

The Ministry is unable to provide the number of calls that are presented and played a message to callers stating that the Contact Centre is busy and unable to answer the call, as this data is not collected in any of our technology systems. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, under the basis that this information does not exist.

2) *Please advise how many successful calls have been made to Customer Service Representatives in all of these queues during this time period, broken down by month and phone queue, or provide some other way of advising what proportion of total calls to the call centres the answer to question 1 comprises.*

3) *Please advise the average time a caller has had to wait in your phone queues to get through, broken down by month and phone queue, for the same time period as above. Please distinguish between calls where an automated call-back is utilised, and where it is not.*

Your request for information regarding a 'phone queue' has been interpreted to mean the 0800 559 009 line.

Please find **Table One** below in response to these two aspects of your request.

**Table One:** Number of calls received, number of calls answered, and average time taken to answer at the Ministry's Contact Centre, broken down by month, from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2024.

Month	Calls Offered	Calls Answered	Average time to Answer
February 2023	429,873	312,026	18:15
March 2023	332,551	258,690	13:40
April 2023	256,327	199,186	13:30
May 2023	321,734	255,973	11:07
June 2023	284,189	225,530	11:13
July 2023	266,793	212,330	12:13
August 2023	295,831	237,514	11:19
September 2023	290,437	220,613	13:56
October 2023	269,573	218,046	11:31
November 2023	261,153	212,070	11:55
December 2023	249,358	205,549	10:47
January 2024	289,730	239,032	10:38

4) *Please provide any policy that explains the reasoning for why a client is presented with instructions to 'Call Work and Income' when they are attempting to apply for assistance online, I.e. In what circumstances are they able to apply for assistance online, and in what circumstances are they required to call the call centre?*

This aspect of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as this information does not exist.

The Ministry does not have any policy to restrict clients applying for assistance to specific forms of communication (such as over the phone, or online). However, the Ministry acknowledges that many online offerings are currently inactive following COVID-19 and technical/resource limitations.

Please find a copy of our internal 'doogle' guidelines on what can be done via the Ministry's online service 'MyMSD' attached as **Appendix A**.

5) *Please provide a breakdown of how applications for Work and Income assistance were received (phone contact, online application or in person at an office) for the same time period, broken down by request type e.g. benefit application, food grant, special needs grant etc.*

The Ministry does not record the manner in which applications are received. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as this information does not exist.

The Ministry aims to answer all calls to our 0800 services as quickly as possible. We are experiencing more demand across all of the Ministry's Contact Centres. We continue to work on how we can improve these services to ensure we are meeting the needs of New Zealanders as and when they need to contact us.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request relating to data and information regarding calls to Ministry contact centres, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

*p.p.* 

Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**