



21 November 2019

Our reference: LEX 49035

Ms Julie Middleton

Only by email: [foi+request-5830-c5106769@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-5830-c5106769@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Ms Middleton

### Your Freedom of Information Enquiry

I refer to your enquiry requesting access to information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)*, dated and received by the Department of Human Services (**department**) on 8 November 2019, made in the following terms:

'I am seeking the following statistics:

- 1.The annual number of Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients from 1992.
- 2.To determine statistics for each state and territory, reconcile with the figures in point 1 and provide the annual totals for each separate state and territory. That is, the annual number of DSP recipients for each state and territory from 1992.
- 3.The annual number of Newstart Allowance (NSA) recipients from 1992.
- 4.To determine statistics for each state and territory, reconcile with the figures in point 3 and provide the annual totals for each separate state and territory. That is, the annual number of NSA recipients for each state and territory from 1992.'

On 14 November 2019, you sent a second email to the department. That email contained a request for access to information under the FOI Act, made in the same terms as your original email dated 8 November 2019.

Having now reviewed your requests dated 8 November 2019 and 14 November 2019, I do not consider that your enquiries currently meet the requirements of a valid FOI request under the FOI Act. This is because the right of access under the FOI Act provides for access to documents, not information.

Your requests do not clearly identify the documents you are seeking. Rather than request access to a document held by the department, you have requested access to information.

As such, the purpose of this letter is to assist you to make a valid FOI request, if that is how you would like to proceed.

## **Request for statistical information and data**

The department advised you in relation to your previous enquiry (LEX 48899) that requests for statistical information may be more appropriately addressed by the department's Statistics Team. Your statistics request can be emailed to [statistics@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:statistics@humanservices.gov.au).

Further details on how you can access statistical data related to Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support can also be found on the department's website at the following link: <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/about-us/statistical-information-and-data>.

## **Publicly available statistical information and data**

The Department of Social Services (**DSS**) is responsible for payment demographic data, and has a number of publicly available reports which you may find useful. This includes the following:

- Statistical Papers, containing relevant information relating to Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Newstart Allowance (NSA) recipients for various years, including annual figures broken down by state/territory. The papers are available at the following link: <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/publications-articles/research-publications/statistical-paper-series>;
- Annual reports, containing relevant information relating to the number of DSP and NSA recipients. The annual reports are available at the following link: <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/publications-articles/corporate-publications/annual-reports>;
- 'Labour Market and Related Payments Monthly Profile' publications, containing statistical information relating to NSA recipients for various years, including a breakdown of recipients by state/territory. The publications are available at the following link: <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/labour-market-and-related-payments-monthly-profile-publications>;
- 'Characteristics of Disability Support Pension Recipients' reports, containing information about DSP recipients for various years, including the number of recipients broken down by state/territory. The report is available at the following link: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/characteristics-of-disability-support-pension-recipients>;
- Past research publications, which contain statistical information on DSP and NSA recipients. Relevantly, the September 1997 report contains information about the number of DSP and NSA recipients for various years. The publications can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.dss.gov.au/about-the-department/publications-articles/research-publications/former-department-of-social-security-dss-research-publications/social-security-journal>.

You may also wish to contact DSS for further assistance in relation to your enquiry.

## **How to make a valid FOI request**

Alternatively, if you would like to proceed with an FOI request, you should seek to make a valid request addressed to the department.

To be considered valid, as per section 15 of the FOI Act, your request must:

1. be in writing;
2. state that it is an application for the purposes of the FOI Act;

3. provide such information concerning the document/s you are requesting, as is reasonably necessary to enable a responsible officer of the department **to identify the documents requested**. In drafting the scope of your request you may wish to consider:
  - a. identifying a date range for your request; and
  - b. specifying the type of documents you are seeking; and
4. give details of how we can correspond with you regarding your FOI request.

If you would like to proceed with an FOI request, please reply in writing with a valid request under the FOI Act.

You can reply by email to: [freedomofinformation@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:freedomofinformation@humanservices.gov.au)

You can also post your request to the department at the following address:

Department of Human Services  
PO Box 7820, Canberra BC, ACT, 2610 (No stamp is required for this PO Box number)

If you do not reply within 30 days from the date of this letter, I will understand that you no longer wish to proceed with the matter and I will consider the matter finalised.

### **Further assistance**

If you have any FOI questions, please email [freedomofinformation@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:freedomofinformation@humanservices.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

FOI Registration Officer  
Freedom of Information Team  
Employment Law and Freedom of Information Branch | Legal Services Division  
Department of Human Services