



28 August 2024

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request made under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), received on 5 August 2024. You requested the following:

- 1. Details of internal and external investigations relating to the failure of incorrectly paid cost-of-living payments were recouped by Inland Revenue.*
- 2. Details of the number of employees who were deemed accountable, and their positions.*
- 3. The number of individuals who were officially reprimanded as a result, and their positions.*
- 4. The number of individuals who were fired as a result, and their positions. Please indicate any overlap with those who were reprimanded.*
- 5. What measures have been taken to prevent such a loss from occurring as a result of future projects? Please indicate whether these actions are the result of any internal or external investigations.*
- 6. A summary of why Inland Revenue decided against enforcement action against individuals who did not repay funds to which they were not entitled except in cases of deliberate fraud.*
- 7. A summary of the senior figures who signed off this policy position.*
- 8. Correspondence with ministers regarding the decision to not take enforcement action against those who incorrectly claimed cost-of-living payments except in the case of deliberate fraud.*

### **Item 1**

Information relating to incorrectly paid Cost of Living payments is published on Inland Revenue's Tax Policy website at [taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/publications/2022/2022-ir-col-payment](https://taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/publications/2022/2022-ir-col-payment). Therefore, your request for details of internal and external investigations relating to incorrectly paid Cost of Living payments is refused under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is publicly available.

Some information has been removed from the documents listed above, on the OIA grounds described in the documents.

Payments to ineligible people, the actions taken as a result, and the additional checks, including information being requested from New Zealand Customs, are referred to in the publicly available

information. The investigation by the Office of the Auditor General is also referred to in the information release.

#### **Items 2, 3, and 4**

No individuals were deemed accountable, reprimanded, or fired as a result of the incorrectly paid Cost of Living payments.

#### **Items 5, 6, 7, and 8**

The criteria and parameters of the Cost of Living Payment Scheme meant that the risk of wide-scale Cost of Living payment fraud was reduced. The Cost of Living Payment Scheme provided short term financial support to individuals and the total value of the payment was \$350.

Given these circumstances, a high trust 'push model' was utilised to distribute payments. Cabinet agreed that payments made to ineligible customers would not be recovered unless Inland Revenue determined that information provided was fraudulent.

Regarding a specific future risk strategy, there is no project of the same nature being planned at this stage.

Further information relating to incorrectly paid Cost of Living payments is published on Inland Revenue's Tax Policy website at [taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/publications/2022/2022-ir-col-payment](https://taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/publications/2022/2022-ir-col-payment). Therefore, your requests for items 5, 6, 7, and 8 is refused under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information is publicly available.

Some information has been removed from the documents listed above, on the OIA grounds described in the documents.

The information release includes the names of senior officers who have prepared the memoranda, and correspondence with Ministers.

It may be helpful to refer to the following documents included in the Cost of Living payment information release:

Reference	Title
<b>BN2022/402</b>	Cost of Living Payment: Customs data match <i>(This also refers to the letter from the Auditor-General, available at <a href="https://oag.parliament.nz/2022/cost-of-living">oag.parliament.nz/2022/cost-of-living</a>).</i>
<b>IR2022/452</b>	Cost of Living Payment: Post payment three summary report

#### **Right of review**

If you disagree with my decision on your OIA request, you can ask an Inland Revenue review officer to review my decision. To ask for an internal review, please email the Commissioner of Inland Revenue at: [commissionerscorrespondence@ird.govt.nz](mailto:commissionerscorrespondence@ird.govt.nz).

Alternatively, under section 28(3) of the OIA, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision. You can contact the office of the Ombudsman by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz).

If you choose to have an internal review, you can still ask the Ombudsman for a review.

**Publishing of OIA response**

We intend to publish our response to your request on Inland Revenue's website ([ird.govt.nz](http://ird.govt.nz)) as this information may be of interest to other members of the public. This letter, with your personal details removed, may be published in its entirety. Publishing responses increases the availability of information to the public and is consistent with the OIA's purpose of enabling more effective participation in the making and administration of laws and policies and promoting the accountability of officials.

Thank you again for your request.

Yours sincerely



Sharyn Rea  
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