



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

29 AUG 2017

Rex Landy
fyi-request-6239-d3c025e2@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Rex

On 19 July 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding the Ministry's Red Shirts in the Community initiative.

The Warehouse Red Shirts in Community is a programme which allows young people aged between 16 and 24 to gain work experience at a local Warehouse store.

Participants receive training in retail customer service, communication skills, personal presentation, stock management, and basic Health and Safety.

Programme participants are supported by a Warehouse coordinator who works with local store management to ensure they get a good understanding of the rewards and challenges of a retail career. Warehouse coordinators set clear development plans, provide training inductions and workbook assessment.

Where there is the opportunity, participants, who chose to, can also earn credits towards a National Certificate in Retail (Level 2 NCEA) and a Customer Service Award from The Warehouse. All participants receive a certificate of participation and a verbal reference which can then be used as part of the job seeking process.

Following the programme, Work and Income staff will work with the client to update their work plans and match them with prospective employers or appropriate vacancies managed by Work and Income.

For clarity, each of your questions are addressed in turn.

- *How many candidates have you paid the \$455+GST to attend 'work experience' at The Warehouse since the scheme started?*

In 2015, The Warehouse partnered with Youth Connections to pilot the Red Shirts in Community programme in Auckland, the pilot was deemed successful and the model was made available to the Ministry to consider potentially funding the expansion of the programme. Following a review of the Ministry's stance on fixed employment opportunities, the Ministry and The Warehouse entered into a partnership in February 2016 to further provide young people aged 16 to 24 the opportunity for workplace training.

The Ministry does not provide payment to The Warehouse, the payment is for the participant to receive a National Certificate in Retail. If the participant chooses to not be accredited or the programme is not available at their chosen location, there is no cost to the Ministry.

For the period between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2017, the Ministry has paid for 198 clients to have their work experience accredited. A payment of \$529 (exclusive of GST) is made per participant, in order for the participant to receive the National Certificate in Retail. The Warehouse only acts as an intermediary in this process.

- *How many people who have attended the 'work experience experience' at The Warehouse are now in permanent jobs as a direct result of their attendance at this initiative?*

The Ministry records a client's participation in a programme and their reason for moving off of a benefit separately as clients can participate in multiple programmes across a year and exit from a benefit multiple times in the same year. Therefore establishing a link between the two is difficult and does not provide robust or necessarily meaningful data. Additionally, while the Ministry records and can report on exits from a benefit into employment for working age clients, it does not hold information regarding the direct reason a client has moved off of a benefit, or why they have gained employment.

Even if the Ministry were to undertake the task of establishing a link between a client's participation in the Red Shirts in Community programme and their exit from the benefit and into employment, the Ministry would not be able to confirm that a client had moved off of a benefit as a direct result of their participation in the programme.

As such your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry can advise that of the 247 people who have gone through the programme, 75 per cent have gone on to gain employment, or have exited the benefit or suspended their benefit while in temporary work.

- *Do MSD clients have a choice to attend this 'free work for The Warehouse' scheme, or is it entirely voluntary?*

Participants opt into the programme and there are no sanctions for clients who do not wish to participate or go through the accreditation process.

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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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 Ministry's Red Shirts in the Community Initiative, 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Bound', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery