

16 August 2023

[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-13145

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 5 July 2023 to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

As part of the budget 2022, \$86.486 million over four years was invested to support up to 64,000 people to gain a driver licence. I would like to request information on how this money has been spent, how much of it has been spent, and how many people have received assistance as a result of this investment, and of those people, how many received their drivers licence.

As advised by MSD, the funding for the Driver Licence Support Initiative has been allocated to both MSD and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. Your request was partially transferred to Waka Kotahi on 20 July 2023, to provide you with information on the funds allocated to Waka Kotahi.

Waka Kotahi received \$16.95 million over four years in Budget 2022 for new roles supporting community driver education providers, and for expansion of test routes, testing officers, and mobile theory testing across New Zealand. The Driver Licensing Improvement Programme (DLIP) is a cross agency programme led by Waka Kotahi that was set up in June 2022 to make getting a driver licence more accessible and equitable. DLIP is leading this work for Waka Kotahi.

The total expenditure on the initiative for the 2022/23 financial year was \$912,000.

New regional roles

Budget 2022 funded 11 new regional roles, including seven regional advisors, three safer driver education advisors, and one testing administration role.

New regional support roles have been introduced to work with local community driver licensing providers to improve access to the driver licence system. A new regional advisors team has been established, with six regional advisors appointed across the motu. Regional Advisors commenced their roles on 17 July 2023 and are they now working in their communities. Recruitment for a seventh regional advisor for Southland, Canterbury and Otago is currently underway.

Each advisor will work with local communities on driver licensing solutions, connecting community providers, driver trainers, mentors, and government organisations to help improve the driver licence system.

The development of these roles involved engaging with key stakeholders to ensure the roles met the needs of communities, scoping of the roles, and a regional recruitment process. It was important to align the regional roles with the outcome of the tender process for the Driver Licence Training and Support Programme run by MSD (funded from Budget 2022), to ensure relationships are developed and support is provided to the funded driver education providers for the next three years. The approved providers across the country from this tender process were announced in July 2023 and can be found at: www.gets.govt.nz/MSD/ExternalTenderDetails.htm?id=26899865.

Three additional Safer Driver Education Advisor roles are being established to work with community providers on driver training materials, and a testing administration role is being established to improve access to group bookings for community providers. These roles are expected to be operational by September 2023.

Expansion of test routes

In late 2022, new test routes have been opened in Kaikohe, Dargaville, Wairoa and Waipukurau. Additional routes are being considered and further routes are expected to be added in late 2023 and into 2024.

Expansion of testing officers

One of the initiatives that has been put in place by DLIP to help reduce barriers people face to getting a driver licence is a new Community Driver Testing Officer (CDTO) role. Twelve CDTOs, all trained and qualified as testing officers, are working in communities across Tairāwhiti, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay and Te Tai Tokerau. These roles are all funded through Budget 2022 allocations.

In contrast to driver testing officers who are employed by Vehicle Testing NZ (VTNZ) and undertake testing for the general public, CDTOs work with the providers of community driver licence programmes who understand the particular needs of their students. They are part of the local community, have more time to spend with individual students to support them through their driver licensing journey, and are able to be flexible around test booking times.

Since the introduction of the first CDTOs in June 2022, and as numbers of trained CDTOs have progressively increased to 12 officers, 1,705 tests have been undertaken (as at 24 July 2023) with 1,526 people passing their test and around 72% of people tested identifying as Māori.

Most of the CDTOs are supporting the two driver licensing trials being run by DLIP in Tairāwhiti and Te Tai Tokerau in partnership with Far North Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP) and Tairāwhiti REAP. New ways of making access to driver testing for restricted and full licences faster and easier are being trialled, with the CDTO role as a key component. Four additional CDTOs are currently being trained. Training will be completed in mid-August 2023, and 2 CDTOs will be based in Northland and two based in the Bay of Plenty. Plans are in place to train up to a further 18 CDTOs in the upcoming financial year.

The impact of these community initiatives on the lives of people in both Tairāwhiti and Te Tai Tokerau can be seen in the videos at: www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/improving-the-driver-licensing-system/.

Mobile theory testing

Waka Kotahi has increased mobile theory testing with our two trial partners in Tairāwhiti and Te Tai Tokerau, and we will be working with the newly announced MSD funded partners to ensure appropriate access to theory testing.

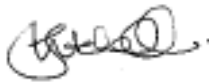
We are working to establish a new trial with a community partner who will be able to use their local staff to take mobile theory testing services directly to the communities they work with. This will include increasing the availability of theory testing in their region and providing services at many local venues such as marae, schools, workplaces, churches, and any other places where there is demand making the service more accessible.

Further information on DLIP and the work that Waka Kotahi is doing to improve the driver licensing system can be found at: www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/improving-the-driver-licensing-system/.

In line with Waka Kotahi policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Ministerial Services by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Jodi Mitchell

National Manager Performance and Insights