

39143 (2021)

Upston, Hon Louise

Social Development and Employment (Hon Carmel Sepuloni)

Question

What was the earliest date any Government website specifically stated 2 September 2021 was the last day applications for the first round of the August 2021 wage-subsidy could be lodged; which Government website first explicitly stated a deadline mentioning 2 September 2021; what was the earliest date and time, if any, that the Work and Income website stated 2 September 2021 was the final day first round applications could be lodged?

Reply

I am advised by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) that information about the availability of the Wage Subsidy August 2021 was on the Work and Income website from 9:00am on 20 August 2021. The website said the Wage Subsidy would be open for applications for two weeks. At 11:54am on 31 August 2021, the website was updated to say applications for the first round of the Wage Subsidy August 2021 would close at 11:59 pm on 2 September 2021.

I am further advised that:

- A change was made to the Wage Subsidy revenue test period to ensure businesses were not disadvantaged by the inclusion of 17 August in the period. I refer the Member to the information available via the following link: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/news/2021/wage-subsidy-august-2021-changes-to-revenue-test-period.html>
- Due to a technical issue on the evening of Thursday 2 September 2021, the Work and Income website was unable to accept Wage Subsidy applications for a two hour period from 8:00pm until 10:00pm. This issue was a human error and was the result of work being completed on the website that evening in preparation for the opening of the next round of the Wage Subsidy scheme the following morning. It is not possible to determine exactly how many businesses attempted to make an application for the Wage Subsidy August 2021 between 8.00pm and 10.00pm on 2 September 2021 when the application form was unavailable.
- Some applicants experienced issues when accessing or submitting their applications between 9am and 10.30am on 3 September 2021. This was due to the large volume of applicants accessing and submitting the application form between these times.

In fairness to those who tried to apply between 8:00pm and 10:00pm on 2 September 2021, MSD made the decision to extend the application period from the original close off time of 11:59pm, out to 7:00am Friday 3 September. Businesses who advise they were unable to apply for the Wage Subsidy August 2021 between 8.00pm and 10.00pm on 2 September 2021 due to the error on the website, have also been invited to submit a late application.

I am advised by the Ministry that as at 6 September 2021:

- 91% of paid Wage Subsidy August 2021 applications have been paid within three working days
- 87% of applications completed (paid, approved, closed, or declined) have been completed within three working days

- 76% of all applications (including pending) were completed within or have been pending for three working days or less

Once an application is approved, it is paid no later than the next working day. The main reason for any delay is when the information contained in the application cannot be matched with Inland Revenue data. The Ministry is working with applicants and Inland Revenue to ensure applications that do not match with Inland Revenue data are processed as quickly as possible. This includes calling over 7,000 applicants a day to check information and working with them to make the changes needed to get their application processed. Once the application information is matched, the applicant will receive payment either the same day, or next business day.