

Illegal benefit admissions

Several solo mothers in Christchurch have telephoned the Social Welfare Department to say they are receiving the domestic purposes benefit illegally.

The department has also received anonymous telephone calls from people claiming that neighbours or friends are living in a de facto relationship and receiving benefits.

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The calls have been made after an announcement by the Minister of Social Welfare (Mr. Walker) in Christchurch on Tuesday that the domestic purposes benefit was being abused, and in many cases illegally drawn.

He said that there was an increasing number of cases where a solo parent was drawing the benefit, while living in a de-facto relationship, and, therefore, in effect receiving two incomes, one tax-free, at the expense of the taxpayer.

The assistant director of the department in Christchurch (Mr C. L. Waters) said yesterday that eight mothers had telephoned to say they were receiving the benefit illegally, and about 12 anonymous calls had been received.

Mr Waters said that all these cases would be investigated. If solo mothers came forward they would not be prosecuted, but there was no guarantee of not prosecuting in the future, said Mr Waters.

"We are not carrying out a witch-hunt. We want to pay people who deserve the benefit. We do not want to give the impression of snooping."

Mr Waters said that social workers normally visited a person when they applied for a benefit. This was necessary to establish how much assistance was needed.

In Christchurch, 2700 people were receiving the benefit, which ranged from \$52.32 to \$68.32.