



On 21 July 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information concerning emergency housing in Rotorua.

As you are aware, the Government has recently announced funding for 3,000 emergency housing places per year, allocating \$41.1 million over the next four years for both contracted emergency housing providers and a new emergency housing grant which has been available from July 2016. This new Special Needs Grant for emergency housing does not need to be paid back and can be paid for up to seven days while people work with us to identify alternative housing options.

Up to 800 emergency housing places can be occupied at any one time, with an expected maximum stay of three months. This will total more than 3000 places per year, though with both individuals and families housed, the total is likely to be higher.

The Ministry is still developing its reporting systems for social housing. In 2015, the Ministry transitioned from using Housing New Zealand's IT system to its own internal IT system. This has meant that, generally, the Ministry can only produce snapshot reports. Reporting on, and tracking people, through the housing continuum is more complicated.

Agencies (including Ministry of Social Development) have not been able to specifically report on and track emergency housing demand in the past, but it's important to consider that within the wider body of work underway.

Government recognised some time ago that the services that fit into the previously loose definition of emergency housing were delivered through a range of non-government agencies, city missions, night shelters, privately run transitional accommodation, and the payment of hardship assistance was made under a number of Work and Income categories.

Emergency housing funding has been fragmented and there was no overall outcome based analysis of how effective this funding was, and where it was needed most.

A comprehensive review of the emergency housing sector, including its funding was undertaken, in close consultation with the community sector and NGO's.

Government has committed money and resources to coming up with an emergency housing model that a: directs funding where it is needed most, and b: allows us to track need far more effectively than agencies have in the past.

While assistance with housing was previously bundled together with a range of hardship assistance, support for emergency housing is now provided through the dedicated new special needs grant. This will capture the level and nature of the demand for emergency housing support, allowing us to measure trends over time. This is critical to our role as the agency responsible for granting the new emergency housing SNG and contracting with providers.

However at this point in time, I am unable to provide you with the number of people in Rotorua who required emergency accommodation, nor answer the following parts of your request:

- *How many people in Rotorua are currently in emergency housing?*
- *How many people in Rotorua have been placed in emergency housing in the first six months of this year?*
- *How much has this cost?*
- *How many people in Rotorua have been placed in emergency housing (broken down by year) each year for the past three years?*
- *How much has this cost (broken down by year)?*
- *What is the most that has been paid for one family in Rotorua to be placed in emergency housing and over what time frame?*
- *How much has been paid to each provider for emergency housing over the past 12 months?*

While the Ministry records what hardship assistance has been provided for accommodation, it does not separate out if that assistance is for emergency housing. Details about the type of accommodation assistance provided are recorded on notes in client files. To provide this information Ministry staff would need to review thousands of files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

- *How many places are being used for emergency housing throughout Rotorua? Please provide details of the places and how these places are selected?*

Where someone presents with an emergency housing need Work and Income staff will work with people to look at all options. Ministry staff will look into whether family or friends are able to help. There are currently no contracted emergency housing providers in Rotorua. Work and Income staff are, however, able to provide options and advice around short-term accommodation, and can help with immediate financial assistance to cover those costs.

The Ministry's priority is to address the immediate need, and in locations where there are no contracted emergency housing providers, paying for motel, hotel or similar accommodation may be the only option available.

Further announcements regarding the funding of emergency housing can be found on the following links:

Information on the comprehensive funding review:

[www.beehive.govt.nz/release/500000-boost-emergency-housing-providers](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/500000-boost-emergency-housing-providers)

Funding announcement for contracted emergency housing places and the new SNG which will allow us to track demand: [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-2016-3000-emergency-housing-places-funded](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-2016-3000-emergency-housing-places-funded)

First announcement for contracted services: [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/boost-emergency-housing-begins-today](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/boost-emergency-housing-begins-today)

I hope you find this information helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10-152  
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

Nic Blakeley  
**Deputy Chief Executive  
Social Housing**