



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

26 JUL 2016



On 16 May 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information concerning emergency housing in Marlborough.

As you are aware, the Government has recently announced funding for 3000 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 will be available from July 2016. This new Special Needs Grant for emergency housing does not need to be paid back. This 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.

- *How the \$41 million funding boost will affect people living in Marlborough?*

The Ministry is currently seeking proposals from emergency housing providers and it is too early to say how this funding will be distributed regionally and how this funding will affect people living in Marlborough.

- *How many people have required emergency housing grants in Marlborough in the past two months?*

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.

In future the new dedicated non recoverable Special Needs Grant will allow the Ministry to more accurately track demand for emergency housing assistance.

However at this time, I am unable to provide you with the number of people in the Marlborough region who required emergency accommodation in the last two 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 people are on the wait list for Housing New Zealand properties in Marlborough?

The Ministry presumes by this that you mean how many people are on the social housing register in Marlborough. I can tell you as at the end of March 2016, 34 people were on the Social Housing register in Marlborough. More information about the social housing register is available here:

<http://www.housing.msd.govt.nz/information-for-housing-providers/register/index.html>

- *How long are people waiting to be placed in a property?*

The Social Housing register is not static. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher.

All social housing applicants are contacted by the Ministry at least once every 30 days. Regularly checking an applicant's circumstances ensures they remain eligible for social housing and their housing needs are up-to-date.

Unfortunately at this time, the Ministry is unable to provide average time to house by region as the reporting for this is still in the development stage. I am advised that this will take a number of weeks to complete. As such your request for housing wait list data for the Marlborough region is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. It would require significant manual collation to address this part of your request.

However I am able to provide some national data that I hope will be useful.

The table below shows nationally, the number of offers accepted and the average time to accept an offer of social housing, by register priority, for quarters ending 31 December 2016 and 31 March 2016.

Quarter ended	Priority A		Priority B		Priority A and B	
	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed
December 2015	1,243	141.3	170	168.2	1,413	144.5
March 2016	1,250	139.9	190	172.8	1,440	144.3

Please note that since September 2015, the time to house has been defined as the number of days it takes to activate a tenancy from the time an application is first registered on the Social Housing Register. Please note the A and B priority applications noted in this response are as at the time the applicant began their

tenancy and may have changed prior to this date. The average number of days it takes for an applicant to be housed is the number of days between beginning a tenancy from the point they were first confirmed live on the Social Housing Register as an 'A' or 'B' priority. An applicant's time to house will be reported as whichever priority category they were last registered as before beginning a tenancy. The average days to house is calculated on calendar days.

The table below shows nationally the longest time to accept an offer of social housing by register priority for quarters ending 31 December 2016 and 31 March 2016.

Quarter	Priority	Longest days to house nationally
December 2015	B	1,008
December 2015	A	2,591
March 2016	B	2,010
March 2016	A	1,806

In each case the circumstances of the applicant changed while they were on the register. Those changes affected the applicants respective priority ratings and impacted on the time it took them to receive an offer of housing.

It is important to understand that the Social Housing Register is not a time ranked waitlist, rather applicants assessed as being in the most urgent need will be matched to a property first. Unfortunately I am unable to disclose any further information about these individual cases due to privacy reasons, however each case had a complex history.

The length of time a client remains on the Social Housing Register can be dependent on a number of reasons. For example, a client may remain on the social housing register for a longer period of time where they have very specific preferences about where they want to be housed, change the region they wish to live in, or seek housing in areas which have high demand. Additionally, when a client is offered suitable housing and they decline, this will result in the client remaining on the Social Housing Register for a longer duration.

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 available to the wider public after ten working days. 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.

I hope you find this information concerning emergency housing 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



Carl Crafar
Deputy Chief Executive, Social Housing