



On 20 December 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding emergency housing and Allenby Park Hotel in Papatoetoe.

I understand that you received a notification on 3 March of our decision advising you of the decision to grant your request in part, and the reasons for refusing some information you requested under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act.

You will appreciate the complexities of emergency housing, particularly as places are limited or already at capacity, and the demand for affordable social housing is high. The Ministry must consider other housing options for people who require assistance and, in some cases, motels or hotels may be the only viable option available at the time that meets the immediate need of a person's or a family's circumstances.

As of 1 July 2016, the emergency housing Special Needs Grant (SNG) was made available to people who for various reasons, cannot remain in their usual place of residence, if any, and will not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for their or their family's needs. Through the use of emergency housing SNGs, the Ministry has assisted thousands of vulnerable families and individuals in these types of situations.

For the quarter ending 31 December 2016, the Ministry granted 8,860 applications for emergency housing SNGs to 2,616 people, totalling \$7,735,787.91.

In most cases, this type of assistance is not required to be repaid. However, on the rare occasion, where the Ministry becomes aware that a person who has received the emergency housing SNG demonstrates inappropriate behaviours, whilst living in emergency housing, or has unreasonably contributed to their emergency housing need, the Ministry may look to recover the emergency housing SNG payment.

The Ministry may also decide that repayment of the emergency housing SNG is appropriate in situations where it becomes aware that a person is deemed not to make a reasonable effort to access other sources of housing, including temporary solutions, such as staying with friends or family. Further information about what is considered reasonable efforts to access other sources of assistance is available on the Work and Income website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/reasonable-efforts-to-access-other-sources-of-assistance.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/reasonable-efforts-to-access-other-sources-of-assistance.html)

Of the total amount of emergency housing SNGs for the quarter ending 31 December 2016, \$828,068.86 is recoverable for the reasons outlined above. This represents 11 per cent of the total value of emergency housing SNGs. Repayments of recoverable

SNGs are negotiated with people to ensure that the recovery of the debt does not cause them further hardship.

The table below details the five highest amounts of recoverable emergency housing SNGs granted to a client in the quarter ending 31 December 2016. If the granted amount is not spent, then the client does not incur this as debt. Client names have been removed to protect their privacy.

<b>Client</b>	<b>Recoverable Grants</b>	<b>Recoverable Amount Granted</b>
'A'	13	\$28,236.00
'B'	5	\$10,430.00
'C'	5	\$9,462.00
'D'	4	\$8,330.00
'E'	5	\$7,911.00

Further information regarding emergency housing SNGs can be found on the Ministry's website: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html>

Information about emergency housing SNGs for the quarter ending 30 September 2016 is publicly available at [http://www.parliament.nz/en/pb.order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/QWA\\_13809\\_2016/13809-206-phil-twyford-to-the-minister-for-social-housing](http://www.parliament.nz/en/pb.order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/QWA_13809_2016/13809-206-phil-twyford-to-the-minister-for-social-housing). This web link refers to former Social Housing Minister, Hon Paula Bennett's response to Phil Twyford's (MP) question about emergency housing SNGs.

As discussed earlier, motels and other commercial accommodation are only used when all other options are exhausted to provide a short-term solution for those in need, while the Ministry works to bring more contracted emergency housing places available.

To this end, the Ministry has made payments to over 500 accommodation providers since the emergency housing SNG was implemented. Some accommodation has been used frequently, where demand has been high, while accommodation in areas where there has been low demand have been used less frequently.

The Ministry has a guideline to indicate the maximum per night rates for Special Needs Grants to be paid to these accommodation providers, dependent on the type of accommodation provided. However, in certain circumstances a rate higher than in this guideline may be paid, for instance, where essential features required by the client and their immediate family have increased the per night price above the maximum (eg requirement for cooking facilities, wheelchair accessibility, the location of the cheapest accommodation means it is an unreasonable distance to travel for schooling, work or medical needs). Further information about this guideline is available on the Work and Income website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-per-night-rates-for-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-per-night-rates-for-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html)

The table below provides details about the registered suppliers who have received the five highest total amounts paid via Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants for the quarter ending 31 December 2016.

<b>Provider Name</b>	<b>Number of Grants</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Total Amount Granted</b>	<b>Recoverable Amount Granted</b>
Budget Travellers Inn	310	104	\$351,958.00	\$53,627.00
Knightsbridge Motor Lodge	309	116	\$334,578.00	\$57,195.00
540 Motel Limited	155	77	\$242,187.01	\$4,332.00
Allenby Park Hotel	127	54	\$220,750.50	\$24,296.00
Rockfield Motel	143	40	\$199,649.00	\$10,858.00

**Note:**

- The information contained in the table includes suppliers paid through direct credit or via payment card but not providers paid via cheque. Payments by cheque are recorded on individual case files and obtaining this data would require substantial manual collation.

Between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2016, the Ministry paid 414 hardship grants, including emergency housing SNGs, totalling \$451,792.09 to support the accommodation costs of 130 clients at Allenby Park Hotel.

The largest individual grant paid to Allenby Park Hotel between 1 January and 31 December 2016 was \$4,816, which covered the maximum 7 nights' accommodation for a family who stayed in multiple units.

The Ministry's ability to respond quickly to people's housing needs is a priority. The Ministry acknowledges the importance of reporting of this work. The development of tools to provide sophisticated reporting about this type of assistance has been secondary to the Ministry's ability to respond to people who are in urgent need of assistance. In time, the Ministry's capacity for reporting this information will mature and its limitations to report useful information will recede.

This means that information about emergency housing SNGs created prior to 1 July 2016 including information about hotels, motels and caravan parks that Work and Income had paid to accommodate people prior to 1 July 2016, has not yet been collated and is still held in notes on individual case files. In order to answer some of your questions, staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I would be willing to consider dedicating the resource required to develop answers to your outstanding questions if a mutually acceptable timeframe could be agreed. Given the information requested falls outside the Ministry's standard reporting, and that developing the response would have significant resource implications for the Ministry, it is possible that some charge would be levied as permitted under the Official Information Act. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss your request further and can be contacted through the Ministerial and Executive Services (MaES) team by email at: [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz)

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.

The Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. 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.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding emergency housing SNGs and hardship grants paid to Allenby Park Hotel, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Gallacher', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott Gallacher  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Housing**