



Dear

On 26 September 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *What was the average wait time for people on the social housing register for each of the past five years?*
- *How many people in Auckland removed themselves from the waiting list before they have been offered a home? Is it possible to break it down by general reason for removal, e.g. they found their own accommodation, or felt like they were waiting too long?*

The Ministry took over responsibility for managing Social Housing applications and the Social Housing Register in April 2014. The Social Housing Register is dynamic rather than static, and it changes as people's circumstances and situations change. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the family has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services such as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate. Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Register may change also. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

All clients who approach the Ministry seeking Social Housing are offered other financial assistance where it is appropriate for their situation. This can include Accommodation Supplement for private rent, Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, or a Recoverable Assistance Payment Grant. Further information regarding available support can be accessed on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html.

The Social Housing Register consists of the Housing Register and the Transfer Register. The Housing Register records those who are not currently in Social Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Social Housing. The Transfer Register represents those already in Social Housing who are eligible to be rehoused, generally due to a change in circumstances prompting a move to somewhere more appropriate to their needs.

In August 2015, the Ministry transitioned from using Housing New Zealand's IT system to its own. As such, the Ministry cannot provide the median time to house an application from the Social Housing Register prior to the December 2015 quarter. However, I refer you to the table overleaf which provides the median time to house an application from the Social Housing Register, broken down by register type and priority rating, for the quarters ending December 2015 to June 2017.

Table 1: Median time to house (days) Social Housing Register

Quarter Ending	Total Social Housing Register
Dec-15	59
Mar-16	65
Jun-16	49
Sep-16	53
Dec-16	56
Mar-17	52
Jun-17	55

Notes

- Time spent on the Register is recorded as the number of calendar days an application was a Priority A or a Priority B on the Social Housing Register between the date an application is first confirmed live on the Register and the date a tenancy is activated for that application.
- The date a tenancy is activated may differ from the tenancy start date.

The length of time an application remains on the Social Housing Register can be dependent on a number of reasons. For example, an applicant may remain on the Register for a longer period of time where they have specific preferences about where they need to be housed, have a change in circumstances while they are on the Register, or seek housing in areas which have high demand.

The Ministry reports Social Housing Register data on a quarterly basis. More information regarding the average time to house is included in the June quarterly report available here: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/social-housing-quarterly-report-june-2017.pdf.

Individuals may exit the Register for a variety of reasons unique to their situation, such as a change of circumstances which means that they no longer require Social Housing. A full breakdown of individuals who remove themselves from the Social Housing Register, and their reasons for doing so, is not available. Whether a person removes themselves, or whether they exit the Register for another reason is not centrally recorded. Furthermore, applicants are not required to provide the reason they wish to exit.

This information, where it is provided, is held on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, 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.

Through an automated text search I can give an indication of the two most common reasons for individuals exiting the Social Housing Register prior to being housed. These can be that the applicant no longer requires Social Housing or the applicant

makes no further contact when informed that their application is on hold as further verification is required.

Other reasons for exits from the Register that can be electronically pulled are grouped in categories that are not meaningful without looking further into individual case notes.

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 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the Social Housing Register, 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 or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Scott Gallacher
Deputy Chief Executive, Housing