



Dear [REDACTED]

On 19 October 2018 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. How many motels are currently under offer to be used by Housing New Zealand?*
- 2. How many motels does the MSD currently own for Housing New Zealand purposes?*
- 3. How many more motels is MSD considering buying?*
- 4. Provide a breakdown of where these motels are located?*
- 5. How many people are currently staying in MSD motels?*
- 6. The number of children currently staying in MSD motels?*
- 7. How much has been spent purchasing motels for Housing New Zealand to the current date?*
- 8. How much has been spent repairing motels rooms to date?*
- 9. Annual breakdown of the cost of using emergency housing in motels up until the financial year ending 2018?*

On 31 October 2018, the Ministry advised you that part of your request had been transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 were transferred in full, and questions 5, 6, 8, and 9 were transferred in part.

As you will be aware, the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development work to ensure people have their immediate housing needs met. Temporary accommodation is primarily provided in the form of Transitional Housing and Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (SNGs).

When no suitable Transitional Housing is available, the Ministry of Social Development can help meet the cost of short-term accommodation with an Emergency Housing SNG.

On 1 July 2016, the Ministry introduced a non-recoverable Emergency Housing SNG. This grant has been made available to people who cannot remain in their usual place of residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for their or their family's needs. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights, but can be extended depending on an individual's circumstances. In

most cases the grant does not need to be repaid. An individual does not need to be in receipt of a benefit to qualify for an Emergency Housing SNG.

Prior to the December 2016 quarter, emergency housing related hardship grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which included hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. As such, the Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category and any information regarding emergency housing grant payments prior to the December quarter is recorded in notes on individual case files.

All Emergency Housing SNGs are paid in respect of eligible individuals to meet the cost of habitable, adequate accommodation as described on the Ministry website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/adequate-accommodation-for-emergency-housing.html

It is important to note that while the Ministry encourages clients to explore alternative accommodation and provides options, advice and financial assistance to support their housing needs, the final decision over where they live remains with the client.

For clarity your questions are addressed in thematic groupings:

5. *How many people are currently staying in MSD motels?*
6. *The number of children currently staying in MSD motels?*
9. *Annual breakdown of the cost of using emergency housing in motels up until the financial year ending 2018?*

The Ministry is able to provide the number of Emergency Housing SNGs granted in the quarter ending 30 September 2018.

Please find attached Table One which shows the number and amount of Emergency Housing SNGs granted between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2018, broken down by quarter, and accommodation type and Table Two which shows the number and amount of Emergency Housing SNGs granted between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2018, broken down by quarter, and number of nights funded.

Some values are suppressed and represented by 'S'. These numbers are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Due to the nature of the data you have requested and the Ministry's reporting systems the Ministry is unable to provide the number of people who are currently staying in Emergency Housing and the number of children included in an Emergency Housing SNG as it is held in notes on individual client's files. A client may have received a grant for seven days but found other accommodation before the end of that period. Children may also move between Emergency Housing and other accommodation. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review notes on thousands of individual case files. As such, your request for the number of people currently staying in Emergency Housing and the number of children included in Emergency Housing SNGs 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.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

8. How much has been spent repairing motels rooms to date?

The Ministry can provide an emergency housing bond to the provider of the emergency housing as security against any loss arising from damage. The emergency housing bond is intended to be refunded if no such loss occurs (or to be refunded to the extent that the amount of bond exceeds the amount of loss).

The Ministry is unable to provide you with the amount spent repairing motel rooms used for Emergency Housing as it would require substantial manual collation. In the Ministry's reporting system, bonds are usually coded under the reason code "other". In order to single out all payments relating to damage, Ministry staff would have to go through every payment under the reason code "other" to determine which relate to repairs. As such, your request for the amount spent repairing motel rooms 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.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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 and attachments 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 Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Wise', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cassandra Wise

Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Table One: Number and amount of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants granted between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2018, broken down by quarter, and accommodation type.

		Accommodation type							Total
		Not recorded	Holiday park/ Camp ground	Hostel	Marae	Motel/Hotel	Shelter	Total	
December 2016	Number	S	350	364	0	8,111	S	8,860	
	Amount	\$2,020	\$188,929	\$156,844	\$0	\$7,380,888	\$7,107	\$7,735,788	
March 2017	Number	S	365	360	S	8,440	51	9,218	
	Amount	\$225	\$204,699	\$143,083	\$120	\$8,478,067	\$8,894	\$8,835,087	
June 2017	Number	S	523	444	S	10,431	43	11,446	
	Amount	\$960	\$332,015	\$210,192	\$1,064	\$12,053,230	\$12,224	\$12,609,686	
September 2017	Number	S	501	441	0	8,179	S	9,159	
	Amount	\$903	\$306,920	\$187,885	\$0	\$8,462,115	\$6,617	\$8,964,440	
December 2017	Number	S	245	329	0	5,548	S	6,172	
	Amount	\$420	\$169,877	\$158,794	\$0	\$6,219,426	\$18,443	\$6,566,960	
March 2018	Number	0	158	350	S	5,604	S	6,138	
	Amount	\$0	\$94,417	\$168,566	\$1,812	\$6,301,080	\$8,859	\$6,574,733	
June 2018	Number	S	315	561	S	8,338	28	9,245	
	Amount	\$1,890	\$203,970	\$258,603	\$1,850	\$9,930,007	\$18,619	\$10,414,939	
September 2018	Number	S	394	639	S	12,957	24	14,017	
	Amount	\$102	\$272,507	\$330,846	\$1,180	\$15,309,664	\$16,894	\$15,931,192	
Total	Number	10	2,851	3,488	11	67,608	287	74,255	
	Amount	\$6,520	\$1,773,333	\$1,614,813	\$6,026	\$74,134,476	\$97,656	\$77,632,825	

Notes:

- This is a count of grants. A client can have more than one grant in the time period.
- 'S' represents a suppressed cell. These numbers are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.
- 'Holiday park/Camp ground' accommodation is usually self-contained units.
- 'Shelter' includes night shelters/homeless shelters/refuges.

Table Two: Number and amount of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants granted between 1 October 2016 and 30 September 2018, broken down by quarter, and number of nights funded.

		Number of nights funded											Total
		Not recorded	1 night	2 nights	3 nights	4 nights	5 nights	6 nights	7 nights			Total	
December 2016	Number	S	297	296	379	319	279	S	7,069			8,860	
	Amount	\$2,020	\$42,540	\$82,243	\$162,849	\$177,832	\$183,766	\$172,775	\$6,911,763			\$7,735,788	
March 2017	Number	S	308	251	306	281	249	S	7,637			9,218	
	Amount	\$225	\$46,624	\$69,288	\$129,994	\$162,489	\$168,649	\$169,106	\$8,088,712			\$8,835,087	
June 2017	Number	S	299	263	328	268	225	S	9,892			11,446	
	Amount	\$960	\$46,855	\$77,770	\$140,886	\$155,693	\$172,733	\$141,184	\$11,873,604			\$12,609,686	
September 2017	Number	S	337	289	335	236	203	S	7,633			9,159	
	Amount	\$903	\$50,319	\$82,714	\$145,291	\$133,309	\$141,869	\$111,196	\$8,298,840			\$8,964,440	
December 2017	Number	S	259	204	233	164	172	S	5,021			6,172	
	Amount	\$420	\$38,980	\$62,062	\$100,078	\$97,367	\$130,486	\$102,720	\$6,034,847			\$6,566,960	
March 2018	Number	0	268	214	250	210	202	149	4,845			6,138	
	Amount	\$0	\$43,226	\$63,090	\$109,399	\$132,910	\$156,177	\$137,664	\$5,932,266			\$6,574,733	
June 2018	Number	S	348	232	316	227	193	S	7,799			9,245	
	Amount	\$1,890	\$53,001	\$74,266	\$133,715	\$129,577	\$135,383	\$116,957	\$9,770,150			\$10,414,939	
September 2018	Number	S	393	302	362	317	276	S	12,202			14,017	
	Amount	\$102	\$65,773	\$93,593	\$158,312	\$204,990	\$203,852	\$146,784	\$15,057,786			\$15,931,192	
Total	Number	10	2,509	2,051	2,509	2,022	1,799	1,257	62,098			74,255	
	Amount	\$6,520	\$387,319	\$605,025	\$1,080,524	\$1,194,169	\$1,292,914	\$1,098,386	\$71,967,969			\$77,632,825	

Notes:

- This is a count of grants. A client can have more than one grant in the time period.
- Clients showing as staying 7 nights may in fact stay longer than 7 nights.
- 'S' represents a suppressed cell. These numbers are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.