



24 AUG 2020

Tēnā koe

On 3 August 2020, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) received your request, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), for the following information and data from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2020:

1. *How many clients have been housed under emergency accommodation in Greymouth and Westport over each of those years?*
2. *What has been the cost of housing those clients over the years?*
3. *What is the average stay of those clients?*
4. *What does their length of stay range from? (i.e. 7 days to 3 months?)*
5. *Where do your clients come from? (i.e., have they chosen to be assisted to move to the West Coast, are they part of Corrections' Out the Gate Programme, have they been helped to move here to secure a full time job? Please explain why people who have taken up emergency accommodation moved to the Coast.*
6. *Where are your clients housed? Is it motels, hotels, or with contracted accommodation providers?*
7. *Who manages the emergency accommodation?*
8. *What is the average cost of the weekly stay paid for through the emergency accommodation programme for Westport and Greymouth?*
9. *How has this cost changed (for Greymouth and Westport) in the five years from 1 April 2015?*
10. *Is demand for emergency accommodation rising or falling – and why?*

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place or residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances.

After these seven nights, Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation and to determine if another grant is required. The Ministry works hard to support people in emergency housing to secure a long-term housing solution, either through public housing or private rental accommodation. Other options, including transitional housing, can also be explored depending on availability and the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that motels are not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. However, motels provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed.

More information about EH SNGs is available here: www.housing.ms.govt.nz/housing-options/emergency-housing.html.

It is important to note that over 50 percent of people accessing EH SNGs only need between one and three grants before securing more suitable accommodation.

Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time.

There are also a distinct group of people that face a range of complex issues that can be a barrier in securing housing, such as mental health and addictions, criminal history, or family violence. There are still others that need to live in a specific area, due to the need to access specialist care or educational needs for them or their family.

For people with high and complex needs, it can sometimes be challenging to identify suitable long-term housing, which can lead to longer stays in emergency housing. Work and Income work closely with these people to see what can be done to ensure that once they have a home of their own, they have the skills to sustain it, and the support they need to keep it.

The EH SNG was introduced on 1 July 2016. Prior to the December 2016 quarter, emergency housing grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which includes hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. The Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category. Additionally, any information regarding emergency housing grant payments prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case files. As such, information relating to the value of emergency housing prior to December 2016 is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as it would require substantial manual collation to compile this information. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

This response will provide data from 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2020. Please note, the Ministry's financial years run from 1 July to 30 June.

The following tables are attached in Appendix One, and provide a response to all your questions, except Questions Five and Seven, which are addressed on the following page:

- **Table One:** The number of EH SNGs granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 – 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, Work and Income site, number of distinct clients, amount granted, average consecutive weeks, and average value of grants
- **Table Two:** The maximum and minimum number of weeks EH SNGs were granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 – 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year and Work and Income site
- **Table Three:** The number of EH SNGs granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2020,

broken down by financial year, Work and Income site, and type of accommodation

Please note that in order to protect client privacy, some values in these tables are suppressed and are represented by an 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in the information.

In cases where clients have moved from other locations to take up emergency housing accommodation in Greymouth or Westport, this information is held in notes on individual case files. Therefore, in order to provide you with a response to Question Five, Ministry staff would have to manually review the files of all those who received EH SNGs in Greymouth or Westport to determine whether this information is held by the Ministry. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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 this part of 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.

In relation to Question Seven, accommodation suppliers are responsible for managing their own accommodation. The Ministry does not contract with emergency housing suppliers, rather it provides financial assistance to eligible individuals to meet the cost of short-term commercial accommodation.

The Ministry contracts with social service providers to deliver housing support services to people living in emergency housing. Our support service providers work with accommodation suppliers and clients to ensure that any issues with either clients, or the accommodation, are identified and addressed at an early stage.

The enclosed tables show, in response to Question Ten, that the demand for emergency housing is increasing. As the national housing shortage continues, the number of people the Ministry is helping with emergency accommodation continues to grow. This reflects the shortage of affordable housing, as well as the Government's commitment to ensuring that people in need have somewhere warm and dry to stay.

To help reduce the reliance on motels for emergency accommodation, the Government has also invested significantly in creating more housing, overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. In accordance with the Public Housing Plan 2018-2022, an extra 6,400 public housing places will be delivered by June 2022.

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. 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 emergency housing in Greymouth and Westport, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



 Karen Hocking
General Manager, Housing

Appendix One:

Please see notes for all tables on Page Seven.

Table One: The number of EH SNGs granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 – 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year (July-June), Work and Income site, number of distinct clients, amount granted, average consecutive weeks, and average value of grants

Site	Financial Year	Number of grants	Number of distinct clients	Amount granted	Average consecutive weeks	Average value of grants
Greymouth	2016/17	36	22	\$26,156.53	1.55	\$726.57
	2017/18	73	33	\$47,855.00	2.24	\$655.55
	2018/19	377	89	\$279,279.08	3.93	\$740.79
	2019/20	804	138	\$740,180.57	7.27	\$920.62
Westport	2016/17	13	9	\$6,915.00	1.67	\$531.92
	2017/18	19	10	\$13,115.00	2.10	\$690.26
	2018/19	97	21	\$81,907.20	4.19	\$844.40
	2019/20	157	39	\$100,510.00	4.85	\$640.19

Table Two: The maximum and minimum number of consecutive weeks EH SNGs were granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 – 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year and Work and Income site

Site	Financial Year	Maximum weeks	Minimum weeks
Greymouth	2016/17	7	1
	2017/18	7	1
	2018/19	21	1
	2019/20	46	1
Westport	2016/17	5	1
	2017/18	7	1
	2018/19	20	1
	2019/20	28	1

Table Three: The number of EH SNGs granted in the Greymouth and Westport Service Centres during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2020, broken down by financial year, Work and Income site, and type of accommodation

Site	Financial Year	Motel / Hotel	Hostel	Holiday park / Camp ground	Shelter	Total
Greymouth	2016/17	26	S	S	0	36
	2017/18	39	11	23	0	73
	2018/19	262	S	90	S	377
	2019/20	687	7	110	0	804
Westport	2016/17	S	S	6	0	13
	2017/18	7	7	S	S	19
	2018/19	S	S	51	0	97
	2019/20	104	0	53	0	157

Notes for all tables:

- As stated in the letter, the 2016/2017 financial year is not complete, as EH SNGs could not be reported on prior to October 2016.
- This is counting Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) from 1 October 2016.
- 'Site' is based on the Work and Income site where the recommending case manager for the application was based at the time of the grant.
- Amount granted is not necessarily the amount spent.
- Distinct clients are counted for each period. A client may be counted across multiple years.
- The 'consecutive weeks' calculation is based on the client's most recent grant within a year. They may have had multiple grants in that period.
- A client's total stay may cross more than one year. The length of stay at the time of their last grant in each year is what is used to calculate the average time.
- Prior to 29 March 2020, 'consecutive weeks' is based on the number of weeks in which the client had received an EH SNG. After four weeks with no grants, the consecutive count is reset to zero and a new spell in emergency housing begins.
- After 29 March 2020, 'consecutive weeks' is calculated based on the check in and check out dates for which emergency housing grants have been granted.
- Changes in the number of grants granted by particular sites in the June 2020 year reflects operational changes introduced by the Ministry to manage increased demand over the COVID-19 lockdown.
- As a result of COVID-19, the Ministry made greater use of phone-based and online services. This means that clients in a region may have received a grant from any of their region's offices regardless of their physical location.
- The 'consecutive weeks' calculation is operational, therefore, it can change slightly over time.
- The types of accommodation funded are categorised under: motel/hotel, hostel, holiday park/camp ground, or shelter.
- Types of accommodation offered by a supplier may cross multiple categories as this is selected by the case manager for each grant and is not linked to the supplier. For example: a motel may also provide campground or holiday park facilities, but be recorded solely as a motel.
- In certain circumstances, low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified. Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated.
- Secondary suppression rules have also been applied where required. Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.