



14 SEP 2020

Tēnā koe

On 18 August 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information about the use of private rentals for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs):

- *The numbers of houses that were rented out via this scheme.*
- *What regions of the country were these houses rented out in. Was it just Auckland or outside of the country?*
- *The cost of this scheme.*
- *How long it was in operation for?*

EH SNGs are 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 them or their family's needs. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances. Please note the EH SNG is not a scheme, it is a policy.

The Ministry provides ongoing support to help people secure a long-term housing solution, including looking into public housing and private rental accommodation as an option, depending on the individual's circumstances. EH SNGs are short-term in nature. The policy is aimed at encouraging clients to continue to search for their own accommodation options.

More information about emergency housing can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

When the Ministry began using private properties, there was a high demand for emergency accommodation, and a very limited range of options to house people short-term, particularly larger families. The first EH SNG for private accommodation was granted on 8 November 2017.

The use of private properties allowed the Ministry to keep families together. Larger family groups would have otherwise been accommodated across multiple motel units. These private properties were largely stand-alone houses supplying accommodation for families.

The Ministry's arrangement with private property owners ended on 30 June 2020. Due to the increased availability of motel accommodation as a result of reduced tourism demand, the Ministry now manages the needs of those requiring emergency housing without using private properties.

The Ministry predominantly used private properties for emergency housing in the Auckland region, with a small number of instances in the Bay of Plenty, the East coast and Southern regions.

The Ministry does not hold the addresses of all the properties used by a supplier to provide emergency housing. When a client requires emergency housing, the Ministry pays the supplier directly (on the client's behalf) and the supplier places the client in a property. Therefore, the Ministry is unable to quantify how many houses are being used for Emergency accommodation. As such, I refuse this aspect of your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act, as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry is unable to isolate the cost data for private property owners as the Ministry reports on the total amount spent on EH SNGs to a particular supplier, who may own a mix of private properties and other accommodation such as a lodge or motel. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

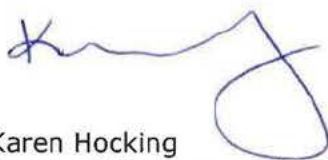
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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. 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 use of private rentals for EH SNGs, 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