



15 JUN 2021

Tēnā koe

On 18 May 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information regarding emergency housing:

1. *Copies of any complaints given to them about people in emergency housing or hotels as part of the emergency housing program over the last 12 months.*
2. *All evidence of damage to property at the hotels including footage of them doing this.*

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is 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. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended depending on the individual's circumstances.

After these seven nights, Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation and 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 as an option 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. They provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. More information about EH SNGs is available at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/special-needs-grant.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/special-needs-grant.html).

The Ministry expects our clients to get the same quality of service as any other guest, and that our clients observe the rules and conditions of the accommodation supplier. A security deposit is available to suppliers to contribute to any damage costs, beyond normal wear and tear. Damages or losses are charged to the client and they are required to pay it back to the Ministry at an agreed rate.

For the sake of clarity, I will now respond to each of your questions in turn:

1. *Copies of any complaints given to them about people in emergency housing or hotels as part of the emergency housing program over the last 12 months*

Where a client or motelier has concerns around the quality and/or service of a motel, including behaviour of clients, the Ministry's regional housing team address these issues at the time directly with the motelier.

Prior to 28 April 2021, complaints received regarding emergency housing have been reported and addressed regionally. The information would be held on individual email records or case files, and are not centrally reported. As such, I refuse this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act as it would require substantial manual research and collation to locate and prepare this information. 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.

Please note that the Ministry has developed and implemented a new emergency housing complaint recording system from 28 April 2021. The Ministry is currently working on what reporting will be made available publicly from the new complaints recording system and when this will occur.

To ensure providers for emergency housing are delivering accommodation to a suitable standard, the Ministry:

- checks in regularly with clients on issues or concerns with their accommodation when approving subsequent EH SNGs
- escalates concerns or complaints to the housing team who follow up directly at that time with the motelier
- monitors all ongoing issues or complaints received in relation to EH SNG accommodation with moteliers.

2. *All evidence of damage to property at the hotels including footage of them doing this.*

Where the Ministry is paying an EH SNG for accommodation, they can also facilitate the cost of a security deposit. The Ministry is aware that there are always going to be some damages, from normal things such as accidental breakages, or in a few cases more expensive clean-up costs. However, the majority of clients do not need a payment under the security deposit to cover these things. The Ministry, if appropriate, can pay a claim made against the security deposit on behalf of the client. Clients are required to pay back any costs to the Ministry, at a rate that doesn't cause them hardship.

Emergency housing security arrangements such as CCTV are the responsibility of the business owner, these are to be conducted within the relevant New Zealand laws. The Ministry expects that any security arrangements in place by the emergency housing supplier are not operated in a manner that is unlawful, unfair or unreasonably intrusive. The Ministry does not engage in the surveillance of emergency housing premises or hold any footage.

Therefore, this part of your request regarding property damage footage is refused 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 also unable to provide you with written evidence of damages to emergency housing properties as this information would be held on individual client files, if held at all by the Ministry. As such, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act as it would require substantial manual research and

collation to locate and prepare this information. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

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
- 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 and the attached document 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 damages, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Karen Hocking  
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