



01 MAR 2021

On 31 January 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information relating to the funding of motels and other accommodation suppliers in Rotorua and Tauranga:

- 1. How much money was spent on emergency housing grants in Rotorua and Tauranga in 2020,*
- 2. Please list how many placements, how many motels/providers and the total value of the contracts,*
- 3. Please list the names of each motel/provider and how much each was given individually, for both Rotorua and Tauranga,*
- 4. Please list how many placements each motel/provider had, and*
- 5. Please separate the Rotorua and Tauranga motels.*

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and more people are experiencing a severe and immediate need. This demand is generated by a shortage of affordable housing driving up house prices and rents. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs and many seek financial help through the Ministry.

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 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/%20map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

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. Please note that the Ministry does not hold contracts with emergency housing suppliers.

There has been a growing demand nationally for emergency housing as the shortage of affordable housing and rising rents continues to impact low-income whānau, particularly those who are beneficiaries. The year 2020 has seen a significant increase in demand for emergency housing, as the Ministry supported people through the COVID-19 pandemic period with accommodation where they could safely self-isolate. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, people also could not easily move out of emergency housing into long-term accommodation which contributed to longer durations of stay and higher costs.

Changes in the number of grants granted by particular sites in the June 2020 quarter reflects operational changes introduced by the Ministry to manage increased demand over the COVID-lockdown. This saw the Ministry make greater use of phone-based and on-line services, and means that clients in a region may have received a grant from any of their region's offices regardless of their physical location.

Please see attached, in an Excel spreadsheet, the following tables:

- **Table One:** Number of EH SNGs and amount granted by the Ministry in the Rotorua Territorial Local Authority during the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, broken down by supplier and quarter end.
- **Table Two:** Number of EH SNGs, and amount granted by the Ministry in the Tauranga Territorial Local Authority during the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, broken down by supplier and quarter end.

To protect confidentiality, the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding (to a close multiple of three) applied to all cell counts in the table. Additionally, due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. This approach differs to how the data was provided to you on 16 July 2020.

Although the response provided to you on 16 July 2020 had broken the data down by service centre location, the current response breaks down the locations based on the address of clients whose addresses are registered within the Rotorua or Tauranga Territorial Local Authority (TLA) region. Further, TLA is estimated based on the client's address at the time of the grant, and it may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.

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 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 EH SNGs in Rotorua and Tauranga, 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



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Housing