



09 MAR 2021

On 9 February 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), regarding information on the number of people staying in emergency housing in Waikato:

- 1. How many people are staying in emergency housing in Waikato as of February 9, 2021? I would like this information to include the location of such housing, ie. Cambridge, Huntly, Hamilton etc. For accommodation located in Hamilton, please identify the suburb.*
- 2. How many people were staying in emergency housing in Waikato as of February 2020, February 2019, February 2018, February 2017 and February 2016?*
- 3. Please list the types of accommodation used for emergency housing.*

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 whether 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 and 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 here: www.housing.msd.govt.nz/housing-options/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.

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.

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

- 1. How many people are staying in emergency housing in Waikato as of February 9, 2021? I would like this information to include the location of such housing, ie. Cambridge, Huntly, Hamilton etc. For accommodation located in Hamilton, please identify the suburb.*
- 2. How many people were staying in emergency housing in Waikato as of February 2020, February 2019, February 2018, February 2017 and February 2016?*

Please refer to **Table One** overleaf, which shows the number of EH SNGs granted to clients, number of clients, and amount granted for the Hamilton City, Waikato District and Waipa District Territorial Local Authority (TLA), for the quarters ending December, for the years 2017 to 2020.

The EH SNG was introduced on 1 July 2016 in order to fund temporary accommodation at places such as hostels and motels to meet people's immediate housing needs. Prior to the 2016 December 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 and 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. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

This information is only available by TLA. As such, your request for information broken down by suburb is refused under section 18(f) of the Act. To break down the data to the level of suburb would require substantial manual collation, due to the way it is recorded and held on our system. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Please note that the Ministry reports on EH SNG data by quarter, and at the time of your request, the most recent period available was December 2020. I encourage you to make a new request for information at a later date if you would like to receive more up to date data.

Table One: The number of EH SNGs granted to clients, number of clients, and amount granted for the Hamilton City, Waikato District and Waipa District Territorial Local Authority (TLA), for the quarters ending December, for the years 2017 to 2020.

		Quarter Ending			
		December 2017	December 2018	December 2019	December 2020
Hamilton City	Grants	102	1,851	3,270	3,141
	Clients	36	330	501	714
	Amount	\$106,701	\$2,945,972	\$6,603,580	\$10,213,377
Waikato District	Grants	18	60	147	147
	Clients	9	18	51	42
	Amount	\$14,046	\$90,535	\$198,040	\$229,597
Waipa District	Grants	27	48	141	78
	Clients	6	15	27	27
	Amount	\$22,415	\$42,941	\$285,039	\$129,759

Notes:

- This contains counts of grants and clients.
- One client may have more than one EH SNG in a quarter.
- TLAs are defined under the Local Government Act 2002 as a city council or district council.
- TLA is estimated based on the clients address at the time of the grant. It may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.
- Distinct clients can be counted in more than one quarter if they have had grants in multiple quarters.
- Distinct clients should not be summed up across TLAs as they may be represented in multiple TLAs if regularly changing their address.
- The amount granted may not be the amount spent.
- 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 base three applied to all cell counts in the table. The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals. The published counts will never differ by more than 2 counts.

3. Please list the types of accommodation used for emergency housing.

The Ministry manages the need of those requiring emergency housing through commercial accommodation, such as hotels, motels, hostels, shelters and campgrounds.

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 regarding with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding information on emergency housing in Waikato, 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.

Nāku iti noa, nā,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing