



03 MAY 2021

On 23 March 2021, you emailed the Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern office requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

How many of the 22,521 families waiting for public housing were living in cars before being offered emergency motel accommodation?

On 31 March 2021, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) to respond to, as it is of an operational nature.

On 9 April 2021, the Ministry contacted you in order to clarify part of your request. We established that we would provide you with the following information:

The number of individuals on the Public Housing Register that were recorded as living in a car at the time of coming onto the Public Housing Register.

The 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, which is driving up house prices and rent. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs, and many seek financial help through the Ministry.

When New Zealanders are in need of public housing, their needs are recorded on either the Housing Register or the Transfer Register. The combined register is referred to as the Public Housing Register. The Housing Register shows people who are not currently in public housing but who have been assessed as eligible for public housing. The Transfer Register shows people already in public housing but who have applied to be rehoused. While the Ministry completes the housing assessments which inform the Public Housing Register, responsibility for funding and supply sits with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Kāinga Ora, respectively. More information about the Housing Register is available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html.

Across government, there is a major programme of work underway aimed at increasing the supply of public housing and improving housing affordability and supply. Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga/The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kāinga Ora are responsible for increasing the supply of affordable and public housing. This includes planning, and with Kāinga Ora, delivering more public housing, transitional housing, and services to tackle homelessness. HUD is also working to improve housing affordability and supply for aspiring homeowners.

The Public Housing Register is dynamic rather than static, and changes as people's circumstances and situations change. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the family has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services such as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate. Those assessed as having a greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Register may also change. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking public housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. This can include an Accommodation Supplement for private rentals, Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG), or a Recoverable Assistance Payment Grant. Further information regarding available support can be accessed on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html.

At any given time, we have many people, often with high needs and complex situations, looking for housing. The Ministry's role is to ensure that people receive the help they need to access emergency housing, while longer term options are progressed.

I can confirm that of the 26,745 individuals on the Public Housing Register, 405 were recorded as living in a car at the time of their assessment for public housing, as at 31 December 2020. When an applicant completes a Public Housing Register application, Ministry staff will record the type of accommodation the client is currently staying in. Information is updated when the Ministry is aware of a change in circumstances. The number provided is current as at the date of reporting.

Where someone comes to the Ministry for a public housing assessment and tell us they are living in a car, we would work with them to address their immediate and urgent housing need, such as through offering emergency housing or exploring any other options for accommodation they may have available.

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 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 Public Housing Register and individuals living in cars, 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.

Yours sincerely



Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing

