



2 August 2022

Tēnā koe

On 6 July 2022, your request to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development was partially transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many New Zealanders are in Motels waiting for housing?*
- *What is the total cost of emergency motels since the beginning of COVID-19?*

The Ministry contacted you on 12 July 2022 to refine your request because the request was broad in scope and was likely to be refused under section 18(f) of the Act, and substantial manual collation would be required to provide the information requested.

On 18 July 2022, you confirmed that you would like to proceed with the following refinement:

- *Weeks after the Homelessness Action Plan was launched and at the start of the pandemic 2020, 1500 people were put into accommodation. Was the accommodation made up of emergency motels? Do we still have people in emergency motels and what is the total cost since 2020?*

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 rents. 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 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. The combined register is referred to as the Public Housing Register (the Register). While the Ministry completes the housing assessments which inform the Register, responsibility for funding and supply sits with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kainga Ora, respectively. More information about the Register is available here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html).

Each housing application is given a priority rating based on the Ministry's assessment of housing need, and all applications are measured against the same criteria to determine that priority rating. Applicants who are assessed as at risk (Priority A) or as having a serious housing need (Priority B) are placed on the Register until a house becomes available. The Ministry's role is to assess people's needs for Public Housing and if they or a family member need an accessible home, this is captured as part of the assessment process.

The Ministry assesses the client's need for Public Housing through the Social Allocation System (SAS). The SAS assessment covers five criteria: adequacy, suitability, affordability, accessibility, and sustainability. Each category has a rating from one to four with four being the highest level of risk. The rating across these five criteria makes up a priority rating of up to 20. You can find more information regarding the SAS assessment criteria at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html).

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking Public Housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. This can include support to secure private rentals including rent and bond, Accommodation Supplement or Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG), for emergency housing.

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.

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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html).

For clarity, I will respond to each part of your request in turn.

- *Weeks after the Homelessness Action Plan was launched and at the start of the pandemic 2020, 1500 people were put into accommodation. Was the accommodation made up of emergency motels?*

Please see the 18 Month Review of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homeless Action Plan, available here: [www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Addressing-homelessness/HAP/Homelessness-Action-Plan-18-month-review.pdf](http://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Addressing-homelessness/HAP/Homelessness-Action-Plan-18-month-review.pdf)

The plan states on page 4, paragraph 2, that during the initial response to COVID-19, approximately 1,500 people across Aotearoa who were living without shelter or in inappropriate housing and who are typically hard to reach, were housed in motels and provided with wrap-around support services.

For information about homeless clients supported by the Ministry, please refer to **Table One** in the enclosed **Appendix**, showing the number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in insecure housing, broken down by type of accommodation as at 30 June 2022.

- *Do we still have people in emergency motels and what is the total cost since 2020?*

Please refer to **Table Two** in the **Appendix** showing the total amounts granted under the Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EHSNG) from 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2022.

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'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 about emergency housing, 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



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