



19 July 2022

Tēnā koe

On 20 June 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. What the qualifying criteria is for social housing. (i-e the process). Specific to how the determination is made whether or not a person qualifies for one.*
- 2. Furthermore, can you advise what parameters are currently in place to priorities a person to get into a social housing and how the determination is completed.*
- 3. Can you also advise to date how many people are in social housing list in Auckland, what is the average wait time and how many have successfully been into social housing.*
- 4. Can you also advise to date from January 2022 how much MSD has spent on emergency housing.*

On 30 June 2022, the Ministry wrote to you to refine the last question of your request to determine if you wanted information on the whole of New Zealand, or only for the Auckland region. On the same day, you responded that you would like the data for the Auckland region only.

For clarity, I will address your request in turn. Some questions are put together as they fall under the same category.

- 1. Greetings MSD Can you please advise what the qualifying criteria is for social housing. (i-e the process). Specific to how the determination is made whether or not a person qualifies for one.*
- 2. Furthermore, can you advise what parameters are currently in place to priorities a person to get into a social housing and how the determination is completed.*

The Ministry is responsible for:

- confirming a client's eligibility for public housing
- assessing their need for public housing
- determining their priority ranking for public housing, and
- determining their housing needs

A client does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for public housing or income related rent.

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, also known as the Social 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.

Eligibility to social housing is confined to clients who are determined at risk (priority A) or in serious housing need (priority B). Housing need is determined as part of the Social Allocation System (SAS). The Social Allocation System:

- is the assessment tool used to process applications for social housing, and
- makes sure social housing is available only to those in the highest need who do not have alternative housing options

There are five criteria used to establish the priority rating for a client. Each criterion can be rated from one to four, with the maximum priority rating being A20. The criteria are as follows:

- **Adequacy** - focuses on whether the client needs accommodation or needs to move from their current accommodation due to not currently living in any accommodation or living in emergency housing for the time-being; the physical condition/structure or lack of basic facilities of the accommodation, over-crowding or lack of security of tenure of their current accommodation. You can read more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/adequacy-of-current-housing-01.html

- **Suitability** - focuses on needing to move due to: medical, disability or personal needs or family violence or neighbourhood tension (including tension within the household) or other violence relating to the client's current living situation ability to access, afford and sustain alternative housing (that is, the capacity to rent in the private market). You can read more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/suitability-of-current-housing-01.html
- **Affordability** - focuses on the ability to afford alternative, suitable housing in the private market. You can read more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-affordability-01.html
- **Accessibility** - focuses on the ability to access and afford suitable and adequate housing as a result of discrimination, lack of financial means to move and availability of alternative, affordable suitable housing in the private market. You can read more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-accessibility-01.html
- **Sustainability** - focuses on financial management difficulties and difficulties in social functioning and lack of social skills. You can read more information here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/sustainability-of-alternative-housing-01.html

Further information regarding the assessment of housing need can be found at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html

Information regarding the description for each risk rating can be found at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/housing-need-priority-ratings-01.html

Information regarding the calculation of the overall priority rating for social housing assessments can be found at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/calculation-of-overall-priority-rating-01.html

3. Can you also advise to date how many people are in social housing list in Auckland, what is the average wait time and how many have successfully been into social housing.

Please find enclosed in the attached Excel Spreadsheet, the following two tables:

- **Table One:** The number housed, median and mean time to house for the Auckland Super City District during the period 1 January 2022 and 31 May 2022, and
- **Table Two:** The number of Primary Applicants on the Housing Register for the Auckland Super City District as at 31 May 2022

4. Can you also advise to date from January 2022, how much MSD has spent on emergency housing in the Auckland region only.

Please find enclosed **Table Three** in the attached Excel Spreadsheet. This table outlines the amount spent on Emergency Housing in the Auckland region, broken down by months from January 2022 to the latest available data ending May 2022.

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 assistance through the Ministry.

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 dependant on individual 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 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 at the following link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding social housing in the Auckland region, 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



Karen Hocking
**Group General Manager
Housing**