



13 June 2022

Tēnā koe

On 2 June 2022, your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). You requested the following information:

- *I just wanted to ask, in the housing register, there is a category that says priority A and priority B.*
- *As I have been made aware, there is a point and category system used to place applicants in either Priority A or B. I am trying to find what those categories are and how they make those assessments.*

The Ministry is responsible for:

- Confirming a client's eligibility for social housing
- Assessing their need for social housing
- Determining their priority ranking for social housing and
- Determining their housing needs

A client does not have to be getting a benefit to qualify for social 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.

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, we capture that as part of the assessment process. Clients who are on the Register are referred to Public Housing providers when suitable properties become available.

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking public housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. These options include, for example, an Accommodation Supplement for private renters, 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.

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

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 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, 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