



17 May 2022

Tēnā koe

On 29 March 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *I am looking for information on how many people are receiving the Accommodation Supplement within the district within each AS area. If I could get this information monthly back to January 2021 that would be ideal.*
- *Further, we are after information on how the accommodation supplement areas in Queenstown are decided, e.g. how the area borders are set, what defines why some suburbs are in area 1 vs area 4 for instance, and how often these areas are reviewed.*

On 29 April 2022, the Ministry advised you that it required more time to respond to this request. In accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Official Information Act, the Ministry's decision was extended to be with you no later than 17 May 2022. The reason for the extension was that consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were such that a proper response to the request could not reasonably be made within the original time limit.

The Accommodation Supplement (AS) areas relate specifically to Statistical Area Units, as defined by Statistics New Zealand. These units are grouped into four AS areas reflecting broadly different levels of average rents for two- and three-bedroom rentals (the most common type of lettings):

- Area 1 includes areas with the highest levels of average rent.
- Area 2 includes areas with somewhat lower average rents than Area 1.
- Area 3 includes areas with generally lower rents than area 2.
- Area 4 includes any part of New Zealand not included in Areas 1, 2 or 3.

More information concerning AS Areas can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/accommodation-supplement-tables/definitions-of-areas.html>.

Statistical Area Units were last defined by the Government Statistician on 26 June 2017, and are not equivalent to postal address suburbs, towns or cities, despite occasionally sharing similar names. AS Areas were last reviewed on 1 April 2018.

AS maximum rates are set based on median rents for one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom (or more) private sector rental dwellings in each of the four AS Areas. The median rent information is provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, from tenancy bond rental data for private dwellings.

Entry thresholds for AS are adjusted from 1 April each year to reflect adjustments in main benefit rates. Main benefit rates are adjusted to reflect upwards movement in net average wages. AS maximum rates are adjusted from time to time through the Government's Budget process, to reflect changes in rental costs, depending on other fiscal demands.

Please find Table One in Appendix A, which outlines the number of clients in the Queenstown-Lakes District Territorial Local Authority (TLA) receiving Accommodation Supplement as at the end of each quarter from January 2021 to March 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 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 regarding Accommodation Supplement in Queenstown-Lakes district TLA, 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

*Bridget Saunders*

**Bridget Saunders**  
**Manager Issue Resolution**  
**Service Delivery**

## Appendix A

**Table One: The number of clients in the Queenstown-Lakes District Territorial Local Authority (TLA) receiving Accommodation Supplement (AS) as at the end of each quarter from January 2021 to March 2022, broken down by AS region.**

| Quarter ending | Accommodation supplement region |     |       | Total      |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-----|-------|------------|
|                | 01                              | 04  | Other |            |
| March 2021     | 678                             | 261 | 3     | <b>942</b> |
| June 2021      | 627                             | 267 | 3     | <b>894</b> |
| September 2021 | 675                             | 276 | 3     | <b>954</b> |
| December 2021  | 645                             | 276 | 3     | <b>924</b> |
| March 2022     | 612                             | 255 | 3     | <b>870</b> |

### Notes:

- The number of recipients of AS is the number of individuals, couples or families. It is not necessarily a count of households
- TLA is based on the client's address as at the end of each period.
- The data includes clients of all ages and benefit types, including Non-Beneficiary assistance.
- The 'Other' accommodation supplement region category includes values of 02 and 0.
- '0' likely indicates a non-recorded Area. This can happen when applications are incomplete at the end of the quarter, or where clients have 'no fixed abode'.
- No clients are recorded in Area 3 over the provided periods.
- Accommodation Supplement regions 01, 04 and Other (02 and 0) are as recorded in SWIFTT at the extract date.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.
- A value of one or two may be rounded to zero or three.
- 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 two counts.