



27 October 2022

Tēnā koe

At the outset I wish to explain that we have been unable to answer several of your questions due to the way in which we record the different types of data. Please contact us if you would like to discuss the types of information that are readily available in the Ministry's systems, so that we can provide you with more useful information in response to any future request: [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

On 8 September 2022 you emailed the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. How many people receiving emergency housing grants have failed to meet obligations to find alternative accommodation, for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*
- 2. How many people paying the Emergency Housing Contribution are also in receipt of hardship assistance (excluding grants for emergency housing), for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*
- 3. What is the total outstanding debt to MSD from recoverable emergency housing grants, if any?*
- 4. How many people have left emergency housing for Kainga Ora or other social housing, and how many have left emergency housing for private rentals, for each quarter since 2017?  
How many people have returned to emergency housing after finding alternative accommodation, for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*

Your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development on 12 September 2022 under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act as it was more aligned with the functions of the Ministry of Social Development.

On 10 October 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise you that more time was required for necessary consultations to make a decision on your request. As such, the due date of your request was extended to 3 November 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 help 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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html)

I will now answer your questions in order for clarity.

- 1. How many people receiving emergency housing grants have failed to meet obligations to find alternative accommodation, for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*

I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time. For people with high and complex needs, it can sometimes be challenging to identify suitable long-term housing, which can lead to longer stays in emergency housing. Work and Income through Case Managers and Housing Navigators work closely with these people to see what help is required to secure a private rental and what can be done to ensure that once they have a

home of their own, they have the skills to sustain it, and the support they need to keep it.

*2. How many people paying the Emergency Housing Contribution are also in receipt of hardship assistance (excluding grants for emergency housing), for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

*3. What is the total outstanding debt to MSD from recoverable emergency housing grants, if any?*

Special Needs Grants for emergency housing are generally not recoverable unless the client is not meeting their emergency housing requirements. For example:

- the client has failed to make a reasonable effort in the circumstances to access other sources of housing assistance or
- the client has unreasonably contributed to their immediate emergency housing need or
- the Ministry has been unable to recover the client's contribution for a previous Special Needs Grant for emergency housing or
- the client has not used the Special Needs Grant for emergency housing for the purpose, or for the period, for which the grant was made.

Special Needs Grants paid for an emergency housing security deposit must be made recoverable. If the emergency housing provider requests any amount of the security deposit for actual damage or loss incurred, it is paid to the provider on behalf of the client. The security deposit amount paid will be recovered from the client.

Any amount of a Special Needs Grant for emergency housing that is not used by the client for the purpose or period for which it was granted is recoverable.

You can find out more information about when a special needs grant for emergency housing is recoverable here:

[www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/when-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing-is-recoverable.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/when-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing-is-recoverable.html).

I am unable to provide you with the total outstanding debt to the Ministry from recoverable emergency housing grants as this information is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

However, I am able to provide you with the total amount and the number of non-recoverable and recoverable Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants that were granted in the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022, broken down by quarter. Please see **Table One** in the attached **Appendix**. It is important to note that the amount granted may not be the total amount spent, and that this is a count of grants, not a count of clients. Clients may have multiple grants in a period. Please note, security deposit is not included in the below data.

Please note, the increased number of recoverable EH SNGs between September 2019 and March 2020 is due to the increased number of total grants during this period, increased number of clients entering into emergency housing for the first time, and other economic factors such as increased cost of living and accommodation pressures.

4. *How many people have left emergency housing for Kainga Ora or other social housing, and how many have left emergency housing for private rentals, for each quarter since 2017?*
5. *How many people have returned to emergency housing after finding alternative accommodation, for each quarter since 2017, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and age?*

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The Ministry for Housing and Urban Development regularly publishes information about exits from the Social Housing Register which can be found here: [www.hud.govt.nz/stats-and-insight/public-housing-quarterly-reports/](http://www.hud.govt.nz/stats-and-insight/public-housing-quarterly-reports/).

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 are not satisfied with this response regarding 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hocking  
**Group General Manager  
Housing**



**Appendix**

**Table One: The number and amount of non-recoverable and recoverable Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants that were granted in the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022, broken down by quarter.**

Quarter End	Non Recoverable		Recoverable		Total	
	Amount Granted	Total Grants	Amount Granted	Total Grants	Amount Granted	Total Grants
September 2017	\$8,069,634	8,124	\$894,807	1,035	\$8,964,440	9,159
December 2017	\$5,950,407	5,505	\$616,553	666	\$6,566,960	6,171
March 2018	\$6,057,168	5,517	\$517,565	621	\$6,574,733	6,138
June 2018	\$9,892,127	8,652	\$522,813	591	\$10,414,939	9,243
September 2018	\$15,349,461	13,389	\$581,731	630	\$15,931,192	14,019
December 2018	\$18,707,879	14,934	\$787,090	744	\$19,494,969	15,675
March 2019	\$22,191,586	16,491	\$887,949	771	\$23,079,536	17,265
June 2019	\$33,276,149	22,620	\$1,062,465	957	\$34,338,613	23,574
September 2019	\$40,076,720	27,891	\$1,512,328	1,377	\$41,589,049	29,268
December 2019	\$46,173,934	29,391	\$1,951,128	1,548	\$48,125,062	30,942
March 2020	\$52,388,477	30,849	\$1,681,203	1,293	\$54,069,680	32,139

Quarter End	Non Recoverable		Recoverable		Total	
	Amount Granted	Total Grants	Amount Granted	Total Grants	Amount Granted	Total Grants
June 2020	\$78,616,930	38,370	\$669,839	516	\$79,286,769	38,883
September 2020	\$81,787,185	43,686	\$1,199,014	894	\$82,986,199	44,583
December 2020	\$81,666,927	38,757	\$864,849	585	\$82,531,776	39,342
March 2021	\$76,977,891	33,825	\$827,430	492	\$77,805,321	34,314
June 2021	\$80,420,483	33,825	\$704,224	444	\$81,124,706	34,269
September 2021	\$87,072,958	35,922	\$648,585	408	\$87,721,543	36,330
December 2021	\$108,872,107	39,936	\$567,432	339	\$109,439,539	40,272
March 2022	\$97,942,386	34,884	\$676,896	336	\$98,619,282	35,220
June 2022	\$96,823,346	32,436	\$520,538	264	\$97,343,884	32,700

**Notes for Table One:**

- The amount granted may not be the amount paid
- This is the number of grants not a count of clients, clients can have more than one grant in a period
- 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.
- 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