



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

14 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 17 August 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Under the OIA I request all information held by MSD relating to emergency housing grants given to people to purchase tents as a form of housing. Specifically I ask:

How many of these grants have been given since the EH-SNG system started (by quarter, if available, to present day); and how much was paid in total?

I understand that this no longer takes place. Questions: When did this stop? Who stopped it?

Please supply any policy or operational background papers or instructions to frontline staff (or emails, circulars, memos etc) relating to this.

The Ministry will respond to each part of your request in turn.

How many of these grants have been given since the EH-SNG system started (by quarter, if available, to present day); and how much was paid in total?

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 a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the 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, or by consulting you. I have concluded that, in any case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

I understand that this no longer takes place. Questions: When did this stop? Who stopped it?

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place of residence, if any, and who do not have access to other adequate accommodation to meet their family's needs. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependent on individual circumstances.

The Ministry pays for a client's emergency accommodation through an EH SNG but does not house people. The Ministry generally would not consider a tent adequate for a client's needs in the short term.

It has never been our standard practice to provide grants for tents, but there were some isolated instances of grants in 2018. We reminded staff at that time not to make grants of this kind.

Please supply any policy or operational background papers or instructions to frontline staff (or emails, circulars, memos etc) relating to this.

Please see the attached **Appendix One** containing the report REP/18/3/447 – *Further information on clients receiving tents* – dated 26 March 2018.

Please also see the attached **Appendix Two** containing snippets of instructions to frontline staff taken from our internal webpages.

- 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, 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

Appendix Two

TENTS

Don't process grants for tents.

Tents aren't suitable accommodation for our clients, so please don't grant payments for them.

Operational updates

Please don't process grants for tents

Tents are not suitable accommodation for our clients, and we should not be granting clients payments for tents.

If someone needs accommodation urgently, please follow our emergency housing process. You can find more information on

'out of scope'

No grants for tents

A reminder, tents aren't suitable accommodation for our clients, and we shouldn't be granting clients payments for tents.

If someone needs accommodation urgently, please follow our emergency housing process. You can find more information on

'out of scope'

Preparing for Winter 2018

In the next week or so, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development will be talking about the housing support available to help people through winter this year. This may lead to increased calls and visits to our sites from people who need help with housing. We've given a heads-up to regions and call centres and there's information in the Weekly Briefs this week. Some key messages to re-iterate with teams: Keep making sure we're providing all the support we can to help people and their families, exploring all options to help people, including Special Needs Grants. It can be a tough time for some people. We can help make a difference in the kind of experience they have when they come to us, through our manaakitanga, treating people with kindness and compassion.

There have been a few instances where we've helped pay for a tent for clients where they have asked for this help. We know we want to do everything to help but we want people in permanent housing, not in tents. Can you mention this to your teams and make sure we're not funding tents.