



28 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 10 August 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *Pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982, we request the following information:*
 - a. *Confirmation as to how many people that are or have been registered at the addresses outlined at [2] are unemployed and/or receiving the unemployment benefit broken down by year across the last six years; and*
 - b. *The number of people who are or have resided at each of the addresses outlined at [2] in each calendar year broken down by year across the last six years.*
2. *The addresses are as follows:*
 - a. *293 Fenton Street, Rotorua;*
 - b. *299 Fenton Street, Rotorua;*
 - c. *321 Fenton Street, Rotorua;*
 - d. *247 Fenton Street & 12 Toko Street, Rotorua;*
 - e. *249-251 Fenton Street & 14-16 Toko Street, Rotorua;*
 - f. *131 Lake Road, Rotorua;*
 - g. *16 Sala Street, Rotorua;*
 - h. *18 Ward Street, Rotorua;*
 - i. *3 Meade Street, Rotorua;*
 - j. *26/28 Victoria Street, Rotorua;*
 - k. *107 Malfroy Road, Rotorua;*
 - l. *7 Tryon Street, Rotorua;*
 - m. *273 Fenton Street, Rotorua; and*
 - n. *284-286 Fenton Street, Rotorua.*

On 25 August 2022, you agreed to refine the second part of your request to information regarding the number of distinct clients who have received Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) for the following motels in the past six years:

1. Midway Motel Rotorua
2. Geneva Motor Lodge
3. Malones Motel
4. Ascot on Fenton
5. Rotovegas Motel
6. Lake Rotorua Hotel
7. Alpin Motel & Conference Centre
8. New Castle Motor Lodge
9. Pohutu Lodge Motel
10. Union Victoria Motel
11. Ann's Volcanic Rotorua Motel
12. Apollo Hotel
13. Four Canoes Hotel
14. Emerald Spa Motor Inn

This is because the Ministry is unable to provide this information based on addresses alone.

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 dependent 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 or 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.

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 work closely with these people to see 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.

You have requested to know the number of clients receiving an EH SNG for the selected properties you have nominated, broken down by whether they are unemployed and/or receiving an unemployment benefit. The Ministry has interpreted this aspect of your request to be for those clients receiving an EH SNG, broken down by whether they are unemployed and/or receiving a main benefit. The Ministry provides main benefits to clients but does not have an 'unemployment benefit'.

Please see **Table One** in the attached **Appendix**, which shows the number of distinct clients in selected Emergency Housing suppliers during the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 July 2022 broken down by the Ministry's Registered Supplier Name, whether the client is on a main benefit, and calendar year.

You will note that the following motels have not had EH SNGs recorded in the past six years, and so are not included in the table:

1. Lake Rotorua Hotel
2. Emerald Spa Motor Inn

I am unable to provide you with the number of distinct clients receiving EH SNGs for the suppliers you have requested by whether they are employed or unemployed 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 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. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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 motels that have provided Emergency Housing in the past six years, 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**