



20 July 2023

Tēnā koe

On 18 June 2023, you emailed Kāinga Ora requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Last year data from Palmerston North showed that there was over 700 households on the Housing Waiting Lists. In the Manawatu Standard twice in March and April the number showed a significant drop to 630 households. I also read in Stuff that the figures had been manipulated in the backend of 2022 to make the housing stats look better. However, on 31 May the Manawatu Standard said that there were over 700 again on the waiting list but did not give an exact number nor the reason for the rapid increase. My questions are:

- 1. Is the Manawatu Standard correct that the number is in fact over 700 and what is the exact number of households awaiting state housing on your Palmerston North books?*
- 2. Did the Government or Kāinga Ora artificially deflate figures (numbers overall had dropped a bit nationally at the end of 2022, and we assumed this explained the Palmerston North 630 figure)? If this was the case, what was the reason for it and on whose orders did this occur?*
- 3. What explains the sudden increase in the number of those on the Palmerston North Housing Waiting List in late May 2023, if the figures were not artificially deflated as in Question 2?*

On 21 June 2023, Kāinga Ora transferred your request to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) as the responsibility for managing the Housing Registry falls with the Ministry.

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.

When New Zealanders need Public Housing, their needs are recorded on either the Housing Register or the Transfer Register. The Housing register shows people who are currently not in the Public Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Public Housing. The Transfer Register shows people already in Public Housing who have applied to be rehoused. The combined registered is referred to as the Public Housing Register (the Register). While the Ministry manages the Register, Kāinga Ora and Community Housing Providers match prospective tenants (provided by the Ministry through completed housing assessments) with houses. Kainga Ora and Community Housing Providers also assist with starting and ending tenancies, manage tenancy agreements, transfer tenants, and manage and maintain houses to an agreed standard. Responsibility for funding and supply of Public Housing sits with the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development and Kāinga Ora, respectively.

The Register is dynamic rather than static, and it changes as people's circumstances and situations change. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the family has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate. Those assessed as having greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Registry may change also. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

Further information regarding the assessment of a client's housing need, housing need priority ratings and the calculation of overall priority ratings can be found on the work and Income website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html

We note that you are seeking information regarding the Housing Register with reference to Palmerston North specifically. As such, you may find the Housing Register Information that can be found on the Ministry's website helpful. The information shows the number of applicants on the Housing Register not currently in public housing who have been assessed as eligible and who are ready to be matched to a suitable property. The information has been broken down the Territorial Local Authority and provides data for the last five years. You can find the Housing Register at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html#LatestresultsMarch20231

The data provided on the above link shows the Housing Register numbers for the last five years broken down by quarter. You will note that the most recent data is only available for end of March 2023 quarter. As such we have provided you with the most updated data available in our system. Please refer to **Table One** in the attached **Appendix** which shows the number of

applicants on the Public Housing Register broken down by register type as at the end of each month in the period April 2023 to May 2023.

Data shows that at the end of April and May 2023, there were around 650 applicants on the Housing Register. It is possible that the figures you have referred to in your request would be inclusive of the Transfer Register. We also reiterate that the Housing Register only shows people who are currently not in the Public Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Public Housing.

In response to questions two and three of your request, your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as I have no grounds for believing that the information is either held by another department (for itself and for a departmental agency hosted by it or an interdepartmental executive board serviced by it) or interdepartmental venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority; or connected more closely with the functions of another department. I note there is no obligation on an agency to create information in order to respond to a request. In accordance with this advice from the Office of the Ombudsman, the agency is not required to answer this part of your request, as it does not specifically qualify as a request for official information.

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 regarding the Public Housing Register in Palmerston North, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Karen Hocking
Group General Manager
Housing

Appendix

Table One: Number of applicants on the Public Housing Register broken down by register type at the end of each month in the period April 2023 to May 2023.

Month End	Territorial Local Authority					
	NATIONAL			PALMERSTON NORTH CITY		
	Housing Register	Transfer Register	Total	Housing Register	Transfer Register	Total
30 April 2023	24,438	5,097	29,535	651	168	816
31 May 2023	24,837	5,115	29,949	648	168	816

Notes:

- National Territorial Local Authority for all tables is Inclusive of Auckland Super City
- Territorial Local Authority (TLA) is based on the main applicant's residential address as at the end of each period.
- This only includes priority A and B applications.
- This includes applications both on the Housing Register and the Transfer Register.
- 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 published counts will never differ by more than two counts.