



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

s 9(2)(a)

29 AUG 2017

Dear s 9(2)(a)

On 18 July 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many beneficiaries owe the Ministry of Social Development more than \$10,000 for emergency accommodation?*

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG), which was introduced on 1 July 2016, 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 their or their family's needs. Through the use of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, the Ministry has assisted thousands of vulnerable families and individuals in these types of situations.

Between 1 July 2016 and 12 September 2016, EH SNGs were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants' which included SNGs for various other emergency reasons. Other than a high-level breakdown, the Ministry cannot disaggregate EH SNG payments from other types of assistance granted under that code and any information regarding EH SNG payments for the September quarter are held in notes on individual case files. At the time the Ministry's commitment was to ensure that non recoverable emergency housing assistance was made available at the earliest possible time.

I can advise you that as at 30 June 2017, 35 clients have been granted recoverable SNGs for emergency housing since 12 September 2016, where the total granted in the period was more than \$10,000. These were exceptional cases. In each of these cases, the individuals' immediate needs have been assessed, including giving consideration to repayment.

In most cases, EH SNGs are not required to be repaid. Clients will only be required to repay EH SNGs if they have not made a reasonable effort to access other sources of housing assistance (for example other places to stay), or they have unreasonably contributed to their emergency housing need (for example intentionally damaging accommodation or antisocial behaviour). EH SNGs are recovered at 25 percent of the client's income while they are in emergency housing.

Further information regarding EH SNGs including situations where the Ministry may look to recover the emergency housing SNG payment can be found on the Ministry's website: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

The Associate Minister for Social Housing, Hon Alfred Ngaro, recently responded to a Written Parliamentary Question which provides the number of EH SNGs granted in each quarter from September 2016 to June 2017 by Work and Income region. You can find the response here: www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/QWA_06729_2017/6729-2017-jan-logie-to-the-associate-minister-for-social.

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 available to the wider public shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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 regarding the number of clients owing \$10,000 or more to Work and Income for emergency accommodation 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Gallacher', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott Gallacher
Deputy Chief Executive, Housing