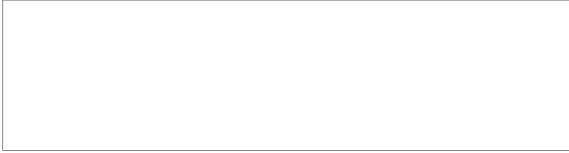




**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

18 DEC 2017



Dear 

On 29 September 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding emergency housing. On 6 October 2017, your request was re-scoped as follows:

1. *This year to date throughout NZ how many Work and Income clients have accessed or are currently receiving emergency housing special needs grants or transitional housing?*
 - a. *To date how much has this cost government?*
 - b. *Can you please provide a breakdown of the number of clients and cost in each district/region?*
2. *Can you please provide a national breakdown of numbers in relation to how many children are currently under emergency housing special needs grants and transitional housing.*
3. *How many Work & Income clients in the Auckland region are currently living in motels, hotels, holiday parks, caravan parks that is being paid for by WINZ through both emergency housing special needs grants and transitional housing?*

While the Ministry is working to ensure emergency housing is available for vulnerable families, the ultimate goal is to support people into long-term, sustainable housing. This includes a focus on increasing the supply of public housing to meet longer-term housing need.

For the sake of clarity, I have addressed your questions in two sections - Transitional Housing and the Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant.

Transitional Housing

If the Ministry cannot help a person or family find a more permanent home straight away, we will try to match them with a transitional housing provider so that their immediate housing needs are met, before we look at other options. Housing families with children is a priority. Not having a warm and comfortable place to live puts a child's health, education and general wellbeing at risk.

Transitional housing provides short-term accommodation and support services for people and families with an immediate need, while they are helped to transition into sustainable housing on a long-term basis. People and families can receive a further 12 weeks support once they have moved into their new property, to help them settle in.

It may be of interest that an additional 540 transitional housing places became available in the September 2017 quarter, with a total of 1,663 places secured for tenancing. The Ministry has a current target of 2,155 places, which could support 8,600 families each year.

Please find overleaf table one which shows the number of individuals and households who have accessed transitional housing between 1 January 2017 and 31 July 2017, broken down by Work and Income region. Table two overleaf also shows the number of children included in the households who have accessed transitional housing during the same period.

Some information the Ministry reports on regarding transitional housing is reliant on details being supplied by the transitional housing providers. Therefore, the information regarding the number of households that have accessed transitional housing up to 31 July 2017, is the most up to date information available at this time.

Table One: The number of individuals and households who have accessed transitional housing between 1 January 2017 and 31 July 2017, broken down by Work and Income region.

Region	Total Placements	
	Individuals	Households
Auckland	1,349	804
Wellington	258	151
Canterbury	339	301
Northland	252	157
Bay of Plenty	89	49
East Coast	88	32
Taranaki	39	13
Central	35	25
Nelson	51	15
Waikato	21	7
Southern	18	17
Total	2,539	1,571

Notes:

- This is a count of individuals and households that have accessed transitional housing at least once between 1 January 2017 and 31 July 2017.

Table Two: The number of children included in the households who have accessed transitional housing between 1 January 2017 and 31 July 2017, broken down by Work and Income region.

Region	Number of children
Auckland	390
Wellington	30
Canterbury	18
Northland	10
Bay of Plenty	50
East Coast	18
Taranaki	75
Central	0
Nelson	23
Waikato	8
Southern	78
Total	700

Notes:

- This is a count of children who have had their date of birth recorded by the transitional housing provider and relies on the accuracy of the transitional housing provider recording a child's date of birth.

The information in table two relies on the accuracy of information provided by the transitional housing providers and does not include all children that were housed by Women's Refuge due to confidentiality reasons. As such, your request for the total number of children included in households who accessed transitional housing is refused 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.

Transitional housing is diverse. In some cases, individual, stand-alone residential homes can be used for transitional housing. In other cases, it may be larger developments, such as former motels or purpose built housing.

As at 31 July 2017, 10 families occupied transitional housing places within a former motel in the Auckland region.

Table three below shows the actual expenditure for transitional housing between 1 January 2017 and 30 September 2017. While this table provides you with the actual expenditure to date, it does not reflect the total cost of transitional housing in this period as some invoices have not yet been completed. In order to provide you with the total cost of transitional housing, including a regional breakdown, Ministry staff would have to manually review each outstanding invoice and the transitional housing provider's individual contracts. As such, this portion of your request is also refused under section 18(f) of the Act.

Table Three: The actual expenditure for transitional housing between 1 January 2017 and 30 September 2017.

Accommodation	Support Services	Total
\$6,189,089	\$4,623,861	\$10,812,950

Notes:

- This represents actual payments made in the nine month period and does not include payments due but not yet paid.
- 'Accommodation' refers to the expenditure for rental payments.
- 'Support Services' refers to the expenditure for the wrap around services provided.

Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant

Where all transitional housing places are occupied, or not appropriate for the household's circumstances, the Ministry can help to meet the cost of short-term accommodation through payment of an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (SNG). Ultimately, the Ministry aims to ensure that everyone is provided with safe and secure housing, and has somewhere to stay in the immediate term.

The Emergency Housing SNG was made available to people who, for various reasons, cannot remain in their usual place of residence, if any, and will not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for their or their family's needs. Emergency accommodation will be provided in the first instance to ensure the person or family has somewhere warm and safe to stay while suitable longer term accommodation is sought. Emergency accommodation is not ideal, but in the vast majority of cases it will be better than the potential alternative, such as a car or a garage. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights, but can be extended dependent on individual circumstances. In most cases, the grant does not need to be repaid.

Of note, the Ministry has seen a 20 per cent decrease in the number of Emergency Housing SNGs being paid between the June and September 2017 quarters, as more transitional housing places became available.

Table four below shows the number of clients and the number and amount of Emergency Housing SNGs granted between 1 January 2017 and 30 September 2017, broken down by Work and Income region. Note that a client may have received multiple grants during the time period.

Table Four: The number of clients, number of grants, and amount of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants granted between 1 January 2017 and 30 September 2017, broken down by Work and Income region.

Region	Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount
Northland	1,132	281	\$869,362
Auckland Metro	13,524	2,904	\$16,658,903
Waikato	2,366	483	\$2,866,751
Taranaki	294	167	\$127,652
Bay of Plenty	1,587	461	\$1,386,884
East Coast	3,027	649	\$2,739,936
Central	1,891	507	\$1,313,288
Wellington	1,507	445	\$1,270,852
Nelson	1,535	301	\$1,212,859
Canterbury	1,155	452	\$617,936
Southern	572	204	\$376,604
Other	1,233	493	\$968,186
Total	29,823	6882	\$30,409,213

Notes:

- Clients may be counted in more than one region but are only counted in the national total once.
- The amount of the grant may not be the same as the amount spent on emergency housing.
- The amount has been rounded to the nearest whole dollar.
- The region is based on the Work and Income region where the recommending Case Manager for the application was based at the time of the grant.
- The 'Other' region includes grants made for clients from the offices such as Contact Centres, Centralised Unit Housing Service Centre, Studylink Processing Centre, National Office and New Zealand Super Service Centres.

Emergency Housing SNGs are paid for a client to stay in commercial accommodation which includes, but is not limited to, motels, hostels or a unit in a campground, to provide adequate short term housing to meet the client's needs. Therefore, 1,267 clients in the Auckland Work and Income region have received an Emergency Housing SNG in the September 2017 quarter to stay in commercial accommodation.

The Ministry cannot report on the number of children associated with Emergency Housing SNGs that were granted this year as this information is held in notes on individual client files and would involve Ministry staff manually accessing these files. As such, your request for the total number of children attached to Emergency Housing SNGs is refused under section 18(f) of the Act.

However, the Ministry can provide you with a snap shot of the number of children included in households who have received an Emergency Housing SNG and were also on the social housing register or in receipt of a main benefit. This approximation is based on information collated over a week's period and is provided in table five below. Please note that it does not necessarily mean that these children stayed in the emergency accommodation. For example, a client may have received the Emergency Housing SNG for them to stay in a motel, whilst their children stayed with friends or family members until they secured permanent accommodation. Also note, this reporting does not capture children in households receiving Emergency Housing SNGs who are not on the social housing register or in receipt of a main benefit.

Table Five: The number of households that received an Emergency Housing SNG in the week ending 29 September 2017, broken down by the number of children recorded in each household, and Work and Income region.

Region	Recorded number of children per household						Total number of households
	No children or unknown	1	2	3	4	5+	
Northland	10	8	S	S	0	S	25
Auckland Metro	130	61	30	19	13	13	266
Waikato	S	S	0	S	0	S	8
Taranaki	S	0	0	S	0	S	S
Bay of Plenty	17	12	16	7	S	S	61
East Coast	26	7	7	7	S	S	54
Central	9	S	S	0	S	0	17
Wellington	19	S	S	S	0	0	28
Nelson	6	S	S	S	0	S	16
Canterbury	14	S	S	0	0	0	20
Southern	S	S	S	0	0	S	8
Other	7	S	S	0	0	0	22
Total	247	116	71	43	26	27	530

Notes:

- This count of households with children that have received an Emergency Housing SNG have been matched as also being on the Social Housing Register, or in receipt of a main benefit, which has allowed us to collect this information. Therefore this is not a total count of all children who are attached to an Emergency Housing SNG.

In order to protect client privacy, some values in table five are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned.

As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Further information about transitional housing and Emergency Housing SNGs can be found on the Ministry's website: <http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/housing-quarterly-report-sep-2017-00.pdf>

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

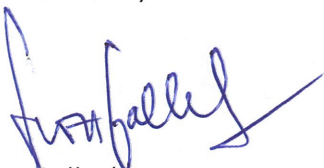
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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 concerning emergency housing 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



Scott Gallacher
Deputy Chief Executive, Housing