



30 NOV 2017

Dear

On 2 October 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Total amount paid for Special Needs Grants – emergency housing – since the grants started.*
- *Five highest payouts for an individual and/or families to stay in emergency housing.*
 - Please base this on the total number of payouts since Work and Income started offering Special Needs Grants for emergency housing.
 - Please include the five highest totals, including all grants, multiple stays, consecutive stays etc.
 - Please state whether the grant was for a family or individual, their location (city/town), and the time period for which they received the grant. Please include their ages (both individual and family members)
 - Please state whether the individual/family left emergency housing for a private rental, Housing New Zealand home or other social housing.
- *The five longest periods individuals and/or families have consecutively stayed in emergency housing.*
 - Please include the length of stay and the dates, the location and whether the grant was for an individual or family, and their ages.
 - Please state whether the individual/family left emergency housing for a private rental, Housing New Zealand home or other social housing.

As you'll be aware, from 1 July 2016 the Ministry of Social Development took on new responsibilities to provide housing of last resort for those in need.

The Ministry helps those with nowhere to stay. Anyone who urgently needs somewhere to stay tonight, or in the next seven days, can call us on 0800 559 009. We can help with rent arrears, with referral to emergency housing providers, and with payments towards temporary accommodation.

Until the Ministry picked up these responsibilities, non-governmental organisations were the main providers of housing of last resort. The Emergency Housing Special Need Grant (SNG) was introduced on 1 July 2016 to fund temporary accommodation at places such as hostels or motels, and at the same time we began contracting transitional housing to provide accommodation for people who needed help organising long-term housing.

When someone urgently needs housing, our first preference is to find them a place with a provider of transitional housing. As you're aware, transitional housing is short-term in nature, and a stepping stone to long-term, sustainable housing. However, where all suitable transitional housing places are full, the Ministry can help to meet the cost of short-term accommodation with an SNG.

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The Emergency Housing SNG was made available to people who 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. 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.

There are some cases, however, where an SNG is paid for long periods or at relatively high cost because that is the best option to ensure this particular person or family has safe and secure housing. Ultimately the Ministry is focused on working with everyone and delivering the individual or family concerned the most appropriate long-term housing solution.

For a picture of overall trends in our provision of housing for those in need, please see the latest Housing Quarterly Report. It shows a 20 per cent decrease in the number of Emergency Housing SNGs being paid, as more transitional housing places became available in the quarter. The Housing Quarterly report can be accessed at the following web-link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2017/social-housing-quarterly-report.html

The total dollar value of Emergency Housing SNGs granted over the period 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016 was \$4,344,000. Please note that the Ministry completed a one-off exercise to collate the data in the quarter ending September 2016, which means this data is an approximation and includes security deposits.

From 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017, \$38,145,001 was granted for Emergency Housing SNGs and this amount does not include security deposits.

The following table shows the five highest total dollar amounts of Emergency Housing SNGs granted, the total number of grants received, and the month of the first and most recent grant, as at 29 September 2017.

Highest dollar amounts granted for Emergency Housing SNGs

Client	Total dollar amount granted	Number of grants	The month of the first and most recent grant
'A'	\$93,793	45	October 2016 to September 2017
'B'	\$82,194	14	May 2017 to September 2017
'C'	\$74,508	19	March 2017 to September 2017
'D'	\$71,909	31	October 2016 to April 2017
'E'	\$71,460	38	December 2016 to September 2017

Note:

- This table includes manual collation and merging of different reports.
- Clients do not receive the amount granted as it is paid directly to the commercial accommodation provider by direct debit or the Work and Income payment card.
- The total amount granted may not be the total amount spent.

The five highest dollar amounts of Emergency Housing SNGs were granted to families who had their latest SNG granted in the Auckland Work and Income region.

All of these families have complex backgrounds that require regular individual case management to assist with options for emergency housing. For some clients, their individual circumstances mean they have a great deal of difficulty in finding suitable housing, and our Emergency Housing SNG can continue for quite some time.

Please note that while our guidelines set out maximum per night rates for Emergency Housing SNGs to be paid to accommodation providers, in certain circumstances a higher rate may be paid. These may be where essential features are required by the client (eg requirement for cooking facilities, wheelchair accessibility, or that the location of the cheapest accommodation means it is an unreasonable distance to travel for schooling, work or medical needs). Further information about this guideline is available on the Work and Income website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-per-night-rates-for-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html

The table below shows the six longest consecutive weeks of Emergency Housing SNGs granted, and the month of the first and most recent grant, as at 29 September 2017. It's important to note that our definition of "consecutive weeks" doesn't mean every consecutive week during a period. The Ministry defines 'consecutive weeks' for Emergency Housing SNGs as ones where there is a period of less than four weeks between each Emergency Housing SNG. That is because we recognise that where grants are close together, stable housing hasn't been established.

Longest consecutive payments of Emergency Housing SNGs

Client	Number of consecutive weeks	The month of the first and most recent grant
'F'	58	July 2016 to September 2017
'G'	47	August 2016 to August 2017
'H'	43	September 2016 to July 2017
'I'	41	September 2016 to June 2017
'J'	39	November 2016 to August 2017
'A'	39	October 2016 to September 2017

Notes:

- This table includes manual collation and merging of different reports.

The six longest consecutive stays using Emergency Housing SNGs were paid to three individuals and three families, of which two had their latest SNG granted in the Central region and four in the Auckland Work and Income regions.

An example of the types of circumstances that lead to a client having a very long period of consecutive Emergency Housing SNG, as in this table, Client F, was given notice to leave their Housing New Zealand property following a positive test of drug use, albeit with no certainty that the client was responsible for the use. Client F has health issues, which required living close to health facilities. The transitional housing options available in the area were not suitable because these places were aimed at housing families, and this person was single. This client has now moved into suitable stable accommodation.

In order to protect client privacy, the Ministry is unable to provide you with the ages of people in these families, the exact dates of the first and latest Emergency Housing SNG granted and whether the individual/family left emergency housing for a private rental, Housing New Zealand home or other social housing 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.

However I hope that by giving you examples of the barriers some clients experience, you are able to gain a sense of some of the issues our clients face in finding stable housing.

If you would like further information regarding any of the points raised, please get in touch with the media team at media@msd.govt.nz.

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 concerning Emergency Housing SNGs 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