



11 JUL 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 15 May 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding homelessness. On 24 May 2018, you further clarified and refined your request. For the sake of clarity I will address your questions in turn.

- *The numbers of homeless/street sleepers on the Social Housing Register who have been housed over the last three years?*

The Ministry holds information on the number of applications on the Social Housing Register for people who are in insecure housing. It's important to note that it would be too simplistic to assume that every person who is without secure accommodation considers themselves homeless and/or seeks help from the Ministry.

Between the quarters ending 30 September 2015 and 31 March 2018, there were 16,618 households which were housed in public housing. Of those, 8,186 households were housed in public housing who were formerly on the Social Housing Register and were recorded as living in insecure housing. The housing type recorded for a public housing application is based on the responses provided by the main applicant. This may not reflect the situation of all household members included in the application. Insecure housing is defined as accommodation such as car/caravan/mobile home, emergency housing, temporarily sharing with other people, homeless, or temporary facility (eg hospital).

Please note that we are unable to provide you with the requested information prior to the quarter ending 30 September 2015 due to the transition of data from Housing New Zealand's IT system to that of the Ministry's.

- *How many of these people have successfully stayed off the streets?*
- *How many have failed staying off the streets and what was the reason for their failings?*

As at the quarter ending 31 March 2018, of the 8,186 households that were housed into public housing who were formerly on the Social Housing Register and were recorded as living in insecure housing, 7,222 of these households remained in their public housing tenancies, while the remaining 964 households no longer continued their tenancy.

When a public housing tenancy has ended, if the former tenant provides a reason for the end of tenancy, this reason is recorded by the housing provider. The housing provider generally only informs the Ministry of the date the tenancy has ended. To collate the reasons for an end of tenancy, the Ministry would need to cross reference client information with the housing providers to determine the reasons that the tenancies ended for people who were housed in public housing between the quarters ending 30 September 2015 and 31 March 2018. Even then, this would only represent information for the tenants who had provided a reason to the housing provider, and as such would be an incomplete picture.

Outside of this information, the Ministry does not hold information about the number of people 'failing to stay off the street' or why this occurred. The reason for a tenancy ending may not represent why or if the person returned to living on the street. Consequently I am refusing your request for this information under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

I can inform you that the reasons for a person to move out of a public housing property may include that the person has secured suitable and sustainable private accommodation, moved to a new public housing tenancy, had a change of household circumstances (including relationship changes, deceased, imprisonment, left New Zealand, entered residential care or change in living arrangements) or moved as a result of a tenancy review.

- *What assistance is offered to these people who continue to fail staying off the streets? Are there mental health services, support staff, trained personnel available for these people?*

When a person approaches the Ministry for support because they are not in secure housing, the response and support provided will depend on their individual circumstances. A Case Manager will work with the individual to assess both their housing need and discuss their situation. This includes ensuring that they are receiving their full entitlement from Work and Income and, where relevant, working with the person to access other services such as approaching a General Practitioner to access mental health support. Case Managers receive a range of training to help them work with clients, including training around the needs of people with mental health.

Examples of the types of assistance and services available to help people with their housing needs are outlined below:

Housing First - Housing First is an internationally-recognised approach to addressing chronic homelessness. The Housing First model recognises that it is easier for people to address issues such as mental health and substance use, once they are housed. It provides stable housing to people experiencing homelessness, before providing them with access to the support services they need to address issues underpinning their homelessness. As at 31 March 2018, 215 households have been placed into secure and stable accommodation. Work is underway to roll out this successful programme, which initially started in Hamilton and Auckland, to other regions across New Zealand. Additional information regarding Housing First is available on the Ministry website here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/housing-first.html

Transitional Housing - Transitional housing offers warm, dry and safe short-term accommodation for those people and families who have no place of their own, generally for up to 12 weeks, or more if necessary while more permanent housing options are sourced. Tenants also receive tailored social support from providers during their stay. There were 2,112 transitional housing places secured for tenancing as at 31 March 2018 with more to come on board. More information regarding Transitional Housing is available on the Ministry website here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/transitional-or-emergency-housing.html

Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (SNG) - The purpose of the Emergency Housing SNG is to help individuals and families with the cost of staying in short-term commercial accommodation such as a motel, if they are temporarily unable to access one of the Ministry's contracted transitional housing places.

Emergency Housing SNGs are not intended as a long-term housing solution, however it is a necessary solution while more sustainable options are progressed. The important thing is that New Zealanders have a warm, safe and dry place to live. Additional information regarding Emergency Housing SNGs is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html

Accommodation Supplement (AS) - AS is a weekly payment provided to assist people who are not in public housing, with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home. A person does not have to be receiving a benefit to qualify for the supplement. Further information regarding AS is accessible on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/accommodation-supplement/

Temporary Additional Support (TAS) - TAS is a weekly payment that helps cover essential living costs that cannot be met from a person's income and through other resources. It is paid for a maximum of 13 weeks, and the recipient does not have to be receiving a benefit to qualify for it. Additional information regarding TAS is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-additional-support/

Appointment of Agent - There will be times when a person may want or need help in their dealings with the Ministry. In these situations the Ministry recommends that they consider appointing an agent or organisation to act on their behalf. The Ministry can also connect people with local community advocacy groups. Information about the appointment of agent process can be found on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/our-services/appointment-of-agent.html

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 relating to public 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,

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

 Scott Gallacher
Deputy Chief Executive, Housing