



21 SEP 2018



Dear 

On 27 July 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The average wait time for people on the housing register per year over the last five years?*
- *What the longest wait time to get a social housing house was in each of the last five years?*
- *What the shortest wait time to receive a social housing house was in the last five years?*
- *How many applications have been rejected in each of the last five years?*

On 2 August, you were advised that the Ministry transitioned from using Housing New Zealand's IT system to its own. As such, the Ministry cannot provide the time to house an application prior to the December 2015 quarter. Due to this, your request was refined to:

- *What was the average wait time for people on the housing register broken down by quarter from December 2015 to June 2018?*
- *What was the longest wait time to get a social housing house broken down by quarter from December 2015 to June 2018?*
- *What was the shortest wait time to receive a social housing house broken down by quarter from December 2015 to June 2018?*
- *How many applications have been rejected broken down by quarter from December 2015 to June 2018?*

The Ministry took over responsibility for managing Social Housing applications and the Social Housing Register in April 2014. The Social Housing Register (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 such as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate.

Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Register may change also. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

All clients who approach the Ministry seeking housing are offered varying financial assistance where it is appropriate for their situation. This can include, but is not limited to Accommodation Supplement for private rent, Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, or a Recoverable Assistance Payment Grant. Further information regarding available support can be accessed on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html.

The Register consists of the Housing Register and the Transfer Register. The Housing Register records those who are not currently in public housing, but who have been assessed as eligible. The Transfer Register represents those already in public housing who are eligible to be rehoused, generally due to a change in circumstances prompting a move to somewhere more appropriate to their needs.

In response to parts one to three of your request, I refer you to table one which provides the number of applications housed, the median time, the minimum time and the maximum time to house an application from the Housing Register for the quarters ending December 2015 to June 2018.

The length of time an application remains on the Register can be dependent on a number of reasons. For example, an applicant may remain on the Register for a longer period of time where they have specific preferences or requirements about where they need to be housed, have a change in circumstances while they are on the Register, or seek housing in areas which have high demand.

It is important to note that the true reflection of the average time a client is on the Register and waiting to be housed is available on the Housing Quarterly Report. The Housing Quarterly Report shows that at 30 June 2018, the mean time to house a client was 136.7 days. Furthermore, the Register is not a time ranked waitlist – people who have been assessed as having the greatest need will be matched to appropriate housing as a priority.

The Ministry reports Social Housing Register data on a quarterly basis. More information regarding the average time to house is included in the June quarterly report available here: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/housing-quarterly-report-jun2018.pdf>.

Your request for the number of applications rejected in each of the last five years is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as this information is recorded in notes on individual case files and substantial manual collation would be required to provide this information. 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.

However, you may be interested in the number of Social Housing assessments that have been started and the number of new applications to the Register. I refer you to tables two and three that show the number of new applications started by case managers and new entries to the Register for the quarters ending December 2015 to June 2018. Please note, the number of Social Housing Assessments started does not directly correlate to the new entries on the Register. An assessment that has been

started may not result in an entry to the Register for a number of reasons such as, the client may not provide all of the information required, a client may not be eligible to be placed on the register or an assessment may lapse due to a client not returning to complete the initial assessment.

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 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 time people have spent on the Register 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

Table One: The number of applications housed, the median time, the minimum time and the maximum time to house an application from the Housing Register for the quarters ending December 2015 to June 2018.

Quarter ending	Number of applications housed in Quarter	Median number of days	Minimum Number of Days	Maximum Number of Days
December 2015	1,379	56	1	2,591
March 2016	1,433	65	2	2,010
June 2016	1,710	49	1	2,926
September 2016	1,629	53	0	4,128
December 2016	1,748	56	0	1,685
March 2017	1,776	51	0	1,616
June 2017	1,703	54	0	1,484
September 2017	1,859	49	0	2,482
December 2017	1,652	57	0	1,967
March 2018	1,532	64	0	3,103
June 2018	1,463	76	0	2,143

Notes:

- This data only includes applications housed from the Housing Register. It does not include those housed from the Transfer Register.
- After September 2015 time to house is defined as the number of calendar days between the date an application is first confirmed live on the Social Housing Register as an 'A' or 'B' priority and the date a tenancy is activated for that application. The date a tenancy is activated may differ from the tenancy start date.
- This data includes A and B priority applications at the time of accepting an offer of public housing, the application priority may have changed prior to this date.
- The quarter in which the tenancy was activated is the quarter in which the application has been reported as housed in.
- Applications housed may have been housed with Housing New Zealand Corporation or with a Community Housing Provider.
- It is not possible to produce data for the September 2015 quarter due to the August IT implementation and migration of data.

Table Two: The number of Social Housing Assessments started between 1 October 2015 and 30 June 2018

Quarter end	Total
December 2015	4,643
March 2016	4,445
June 2016	5,353
September 2016	6,771
December 2016	5,843
March 2017	6,209
June 2017	6,789
September 2017	7,636
December 2017	7,220
March 2018	8,766
June 2018	7,646
Total	71,321

Notes:

- This is a count of assessments started. The assessment may not have led to an application on to the Social Housing register.
- A client may have had more than one assessment started in the period.
- It is not possible to produce data for the September 2015 quarter due to the August IT implementation and migration of data.
- Quarterly information prior to Sep 2015 is not available as assessments were done in HNZ's system.

Table Three: Register entries on to the Social Housing Register between 1 October 2015 and 30 June 2018

Quarter end	Register Type		Total
	Housing	Transfer	
December 2015	2,307	335	2,642
March 2016	2,219	279	2,498
June 2016	2,934	358	3,292
September 2016	3,476	420	3,896
December 2016	3,101	455	3,556
March 2017	3,259	346	3,605
June 2017	3,691	386	4,077
September 2017	3,933	420	4,353
December 2017	3,679	422	4,101
March 2018	4,598	504	5,102
June 2018	4,336	416	4,752

Notes:

- This includes priority A and B applications.