



8 NOV 2019



Dear 

On 19 September 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. How many people are living in emergency accommodation in Westport currently?*
- 2. How many people have lived in emergency accommodation in Westport from the beginning of this year to now?*
- 3. For each case how long has the family/person been in emergency accommodation?*
- 4. Of the people in emergency accommodation how many of those are families with children?*
- 5. How many people spent time in emergency accommodation in Westport in 2018, 2017, and 2016?*
- 6. On average how long was a person/family's stay in temp accommodation for each of those years?*

Your request has been interpreted to refer specifically to people who are receiving Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (SNGs).

As at the time of your request, the Ministry is only able to provide you with EH SNGs figures up to the quarter ending June 2019. The Ministry is currently working on EH SNGs for the quarter ending September 2019 and this will be sent to you as soon as possible.

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place or residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances. In most cases EH SNGs do not have to be paid back.

The Ministry provides ongoing support to help people secure a long-term housing solution, including looking into public housing and private rental accommodation as an option depending on the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that emergency housing is not a long-term solution, particularly for vulnerable people with complex needs. It provides a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. It is important that those who would otherwise be homeless have somewhere warm and dry to stay.

Affordable accommodation in New Zealand is in limited supply, including short term accommodation. More people are seeking help from the Ministry for emergency housing, which is reflected in the figures provided in this response. To address this shortage, the Government has invested significantly in creating more housing, overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. An extra 6,400 public housing places will be delivered by June 2022. In the 2018/2019 financial year, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has delivered on 2,178 public houses and there's a future pipeline of more than 2,700. This year's Budget provided \$283 million to fund and maintain over 2,800 Transitional Housing places throughout New Zealand, along with another \$197 million to expand and strengthen Housing First to high demand areas.

More information about EH SNGs is available here: www.housing.msd.govt.nz/housing-options/emergency-housing.html.

The EH SNG was introduced on 1 July 2016. Prior to the 2016 December quarter, emergency housing grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which includes hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. The Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category and any information regarding emergency housing grant payments prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case files. As such, information relating to the value of Emergency Housing prior to December 2016 is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information 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 more fully 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, the Ministry can provide data regarding EH SNGs in Westport from the December 2016 quarter to the June 2019 quarter. Please find enclosed the following tables:

- Number of clients, number of EH SNGs and amount granted in Westport office during the quarter ending June 2019.
- Number of clients, number of EH SNGs and amount granted in Westport office during the period 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019.

- Number of EH SNGs and amount granted in Westport office by number of consecutive weeks during the period 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019.
- Number of EH SNGs and amount granted in Westport office during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2019.
- Number of clients, number of EH SNGs, amount granted and average consecutive weeks in Westport office during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2019.

A number of very low figures have been suppressed and are represented by an 'S' in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. This information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

Your request for the number of families with children staying in emergency housing is refused 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.

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 with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding in emergency housing in Westport, 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'Karen Hocking', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Karen Hocking
General Manager, Housing

Table 1: Number of Clients, and Number of Special Needs Grants for Emergency Housing in Westport office for the quarter ending June 2019

Quarter Ending	Number of Clients	Number of Grants
June 2019	7	33

Table 2: Number of Clients, Number of Special Needs Grants, and Average Consecutive Weeks, for Emergency Housing in Westport office during the period 1 January 2019 to June 2019

Year	Number of Clients	Number of Grants	Average Consecutive Weeks
2019 (Partial year to June)	18	81	4.56

Table 3: Number of Clients for Emergency Housing in Westport office by number of consecutive weeks during the period 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019

Number of Consecutive Weeks	Number of Clients
1	9
2-6	5
8+	5
Total	18

Table 4: Number of Special Needs Grants for Emergency Housing in Westport office during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2019

Quarter Ending	Number of Grants
December 2016	S
March 2017	6
June 2017	6
September 2017	6
December 2017	S
March 2018	9
June 2018	S
September 2018	S
December 2018	12
March 2019	48
June 2019	33

Table 5: Number of Clients, Number of Special Needs Grants, and Average Consecutive Weeks, for Emergency Housing in Westport office during the period 1 October 2016 to 30 June 2019

Year	Number of Clients	Number of Grants	Average Consecutive Weeks
2016	S	S	1.00
2017	13	19	1.69
2018	8	28	3.25
2019	18	81	4.56

Notes for Tables 1-5:

- Site is based on the Work and Income site where the recommending case manager for the application was based at the time of the grant.
- Consecutive weeks is when the last grant of the period is granted at Westport, any previous grants could have been at a different location, not necessarily in Westport. Clients could have received other grants since in another location.
- Average consecutive weeks is based on the last grant in the period.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified. Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated. Secondary suppression rules have also been applied when required. Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.
- The 2016 calendar year only includes data from October onwards, as prior to the 2016 December quarter, emergency housing grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which includes hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. The Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category and any information regarding emergency housing grant payments prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case files.
- 2019 is only data from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2019.
- Data for the 2016 and 2019 years should not be compared to 2017 and 2018 years as they are partial years and do not contain complete data.