



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

06 APR 2021

Dear

On 8 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information relating to the publicly available Public Housing Register data:

- *Are you able to provide the demographic information currently made public (attached) cross-referenced in any way at all? ie. ethnicity x household composition x age of the main applicant? And could this be done regionally?*
- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises where those on the CURRENT register are living while they wait for public housing (ie. emergency or transitional housing, caravan, tent, overcrowded home etc)*
- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises for the past 3 years, each year, where those on the register were living while they waited for public housing (ie. emergency or transitional housing, caravan, tent, overcrowded home, rental etc)*
- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises for the past 3 years, each year, where people who were placed in emergency housing were living prior to intake ie. rental home, tent, car etc*
- *Any analysis or memos or briefings prepared internally by MSD that analyse the current demographics of the waitlist and/or the drivers behind its increase (please limit this search to the past 12 months)*
- *Any analysis or memos or briefings that look at the impact of job losses on housing stress (please limit to past 12 months)*
- *Any forecasts for housing register numbers including demographic forecasts, ie. which groups are likely to end up on the waitlist*

The demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and more people are experiencing a severe and immediate need. This demand is generated by a shortage of affordable housing, which is driving up house prices and rent. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs, and many seek financial help through the Ministry.

When New Zealanders are in need of public housing, their needs are recorded on either the Housing Register or the Transfer Register. The combined register is referred to as the Public Housing Register. The Housing Register shows people who are not currently in public housing but who have been assessed as eligible for public housing. The Transfer Register shows people already in public housing but who have applied to be

rehoused. While the Ministry completes the housing assessments which inform the Public Housing Register, responsibility for funding and supply sits with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Kāinga Ora, respectively. More information about the Housing Register is available here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html).

The Public Housing Register is dynamic rather than static, and 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 a greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Register may also change. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking public housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. This can include Accommodation Supplement for private rent, Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG), 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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html).

At any given time, we have many people, often with high needs and complex situations, looking for housing. The Ministry's role is to ensure that people receive the help they need to access emergency housing. We provide emergency accommodation while longer term options are progressed. We can also assist with some of the costs of private rentals for those who are eligible. The causes of the increasing demand for public housing are complex, but they include a limited supply of affordable accommodation.

Across government, there is a major programme of work underway aimed at increasing the supply of public housing and improving housing affordability and supply. Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga/The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kāinga Ora are responsible for increasing the supply of affordable and public housing. This includes planning, and with Kāinga Ora, delivering more public housing, transitional housing, and services to tackle homelessness. HUD is also working to improve housing affordability and supply for aspiring homeowners.

For the sake of clarity, I will now answer your questions in turn.

- *Are you able to provide the demographic information currently made public (attached) cross-referenced in any way at all? ie. ethnicity x household composition x age of the main applicant? And could this be done regionally?*

Please find **Table One** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which outlines the total number of applicants on the Public Housing Register broken down by ethnicity and region, as at 31 December 2020.

Please find **Table Two** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which outlines the total number of applicants on the Public Housing Register broken down by household composition and region, as at 31 December 2020.



Please find **Table Three** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which outlines the total number of applicants on the Public Housing Register broken down by age and region, as at 31 December 2020.

Please note, the regions used in the tables above are based on New Zealand's Territorial Land Authority (TLA).

- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises where those on the CURRENT register are living while they wait for public housing (ie. emergency or transitional housing, caravan, tent, overcrowded home etc)*
- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises for the past 3 years, each year, where those on the register were living while they waited for public housing (ie. emergency or transitional housing, caravan, tent, overcrowded home, rental etc)*

Please find **Table Four** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which outlines total number of applications on the Public Housing Register broken down by the type of accommodation the applicant resided in prior to Public Housing, for the calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

- *Please provide any data held by MSD that categorises for the past 3 years, each year, where people who were placed in emergency housing were living prior to intake ie. rental home, tent, car etc*

The Ministry cannot provide you information on the living situations of EH SNG clients, prior to being provided emergency housing. This information can be provided by the applicant but is not a critical part of the application process, therefore is not always collected and recorded. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of client files to establish where a client lived prior to emergency housing, which is often not recorded. As such, I refuse your request 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.

- *Any analysis or memos or briefings prepared internally by MSD that analyse the current demographics of the waitlist and/or the drivers behind its increase (please limit this search to the past 12 months)*

The Ministry has undertaken a search for the relevant information within the scope of this request, and has located the following document:

- *Report - Insights from the Public Housing Register: Applicants for public housing and their current situation, dated 26 February 2021*

The contents of this report have been withheld in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, as these are under active consideration. The release of this information is likely

to prejudice the ability of government to consider advice and the wider public interest of effective government would not be served.

- *Any analysis or memos or briefings that look at the impact of job losses on housing stress (please limit to past 12 months)*

The Ministry has undertaken a search for the relevant information within the scope of this request, however, there were no documents in scope. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the 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.

However, to access proactively released documents from across Government including documents about the impacts of COVID-19 on housing and job loss, please visit the following link: [www.covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/legislation-and-key-documents/proactive-release/housing/](http://www.covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/legislation-and-key-documents/proactive-release/housing/).

- *Any forecasts for housing register numbers including demographic forecasts, ie. which groups are likely to end up on the waitlist*

The Ministry has undertaken a search for any forecasts on the Public Housing Register that may exist, however, forecasting of this nature is not a function of the Ministry. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the 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:

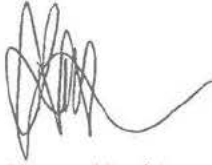
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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. 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 with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding public housing demographics, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KH', followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

 Karen Hocking  
**General Manager**  
**Housing**