



12 APR 2021

Dear

On 4 March 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The total amount of money paid in emergency housing special needs grants per quarter for the period 2017 until today, broken down by accommodation supplier and listed by name of supplier, region in which the supplier is or was located, and the value of emergency housing grants paid per quarter.*
- *The total value of payments made by the Ministry of Social Development and Employment to emergency housing accommodation suppliers claiming costs for damage or loss for each quarter for the period 2017 until today, listed by name of supplier, region in which the supplier is or was located and the value of the payments made in response to claims of damage or loss.*

On 11 March 2021, the Ministry contacted your office to clarify part one of your request, to which you advised you would like additional information for your request. The Ministry advised your office that you would receive the following information:

- *The total amount of money paid in emergency housing special needs grants per quarter for the period 2017 until today, broken down by name of the accommodation supplier and by registered name of supplier, and the value of emergency housing grants paid per quarter.*

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. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended depending on the individual's circumstances.

After these seven nights, Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation and if another grant is required. The Ministry works hard to support people in emergency housing to secure a long-term housing solution, either through public housing or private rental accommodation. Other options including transitional housing can also be explored as an option depending on availability and the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that motels are not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. They provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. More information about EH SNGs is available at the following link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/%20map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

There has been a growing demand nationally for emergency housing as the shortage of affordable housing and rising rents continues to impact low-income whānau, particularly those who are beneficiaries. The year 2020 has seen a significant increase in demand for emergency housing, as the Ministry supported people through the COVID-19 pandemic period with accommodation where they could safely self-isolate. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, people also could not easily move out of emergency housing into long-term accommodation which contributed to longer durations of stay and higher costs.

For sake of clarity, the Ministry will answer your question in turn.

- *The total amount of money paid in emergency housing special needs grants per quarter for the period 2017 until today, broken down by name of the accommodation supplier and by registered name of supplier, and the value of emergency housing grants paid per quarter.*

Please find enclosed in the email that contains this response **Appendix A** which contains **Table One**. Table one outlines the list of suppliers with the amount granted for Emergency Housing from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2020, broken down by quarters.

- *The total value of payments made by the Ministry of Social Development and Employment to emergency housing accommodation suppliers claiming costs for damage or loss for each quarter for the period 2017 until today, listed by name of supplier, region in which the supplier is or was located and the value of the payments made in response to claims of damage or loss.*

The Ministry expects our clients to get the same quality of service as any other guest, and that our clients observe the rules and conditions of the accommodation supplier. A security deposit is available to suppliers to contribute to any damage costs, beyond normal wear and tear. Damages or losses are charged to the client and they are required to pay it back to the Ministry at an agreed rate.

Where a client or motelier has concerns around the quality and/or service of a motel, including behaviour of clients, the Ministry's regional housing team address these issues at the time directly with the motelier.

To ensure providers for emergency housing are delivering accommodation to a suitable standard the Ministry:

- checks in regularly with clients on issues or concerns with their accommodation when approving subsequent EH SNGs
- escalates concerns or complaints to the housing team who follow up directly at that time with the motelier
- monitors all ongoing issues or complaints received in relation to EH SNG accommodation with moteliers.

In regard to question two of your request, damages to properties are classified and paid out as 'other emergency grants'. The Ministry cannot disaggregate payments regarding property damage or loss from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category. In order to provide you with this information for the time period January 2021 and February 2021, Ministry staff would have to review over 5000 individual files. As such, this part of your request is also refused under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and

efficient administration of the public service. More information about 'other emergency grants' can be found at the following link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/other-emergency-grants-01.html.

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. The Ministry has concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

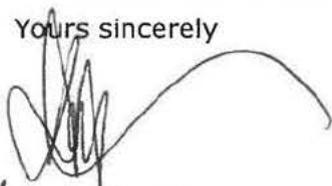
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 the attached document 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 Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, 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



 Karen Hocking
General Manager, Housing