



4 AUG 2021

Tēnā koe

On 7 July 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act (the Act) 1982, the following information:

- *How many people are on the MSD waiting list for social housing in each West Coast district (Buller, Grey, Westland) and how many of those in each district are in the top priority group?*
- *May I have the same figures for this time last year?*
- *What is the average wait and the longest/shortest wait to get a home in each district?*
- *May I have the same figures for this time last year?*

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 driving up house prices and rents. 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.

Each housing application is given a priority rating based on the Ministry's assessment of housing need, and all applications are measured against the same criteria to determine that priority rating. Applicants who are assessed as at risk (Priority A) or as having a serious housing need (Priority B) are placed on the Register until a house becomes available. The Ministry's role is to assess people's needs for public housing and if they or a family member need an accessible home, we capture that as part of the assessment process. Clients who are on the Register will be contacted on a regular basis to confirm their circumstances and are referred to Public Housing providers when suitable properties become available.

Further information regarding the assessment of a client's housing need, housing need priority ratings and the calculation of overall priority ratings can be found on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html.

The Public Housing 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.

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

For the sake of clarity, I will answer each of your questions in two sections.

- *How many people are on the MSD waiting list for social housing in each West Coast district (Buller, Grey, Westland) and how many of those in each district are in the top priority group?*
- *May I have the same figures for this time last year?*

The number of people on the Housing Register and Transfer Register for each West Coast district is published in a quarterly regional update by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. As such, this part of your request for information is refused under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information requested will soon be publicly available.

The Regional Housing factsheets for March 2020 and March 2021 can be found at the following links below:

www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Follow-our-progress/Regional-Dashboards-2020/328e4d166f/Housing-regional-Factsheets-March-2020-West-Coast-Tasman.pdf.

www.hud.govt.nz/assets/News-and-Resources/Statistics-and-Research/Public-housing-reports/Regional-factsheets-March-2021/MHUD210501-Housing-regional-Factsheets-Mar21-West-Coast-Tasman-v2.pdf.

More information regarding the Regional Housing factsheets and other Public Housing reports produced by Ministry of Housing and Urban Development can be found at the following link below:

www.hud.govt.nz/news_and-resources/statistics-and-research/public-housing-reports/.

Regarding the number of people in the top priority group in the Housing Register for each district, please see **Table One** in **Appendix A** which shows the number of applicants in the Buller, Grey, and Westland Territorial Land Authorities (TLA) in priority A20, the highest priority group of the Housing Register.

Also, in order to protect client privacy, values less than 6 are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs and public interest in the information.

Please note that the Ministry has also provided the total number of people on the Housing Register for each district in **Table One** to provide information that is useful to you, as the low number of people in the top priority group were suppressed due to privacy concerns as explained in the notes of **Table One**.

- *What is the average wait and the longest/shortest wait to get a home in each district?*
- *May I have the same figures for this time last year?*

Please see **Table Two** in **Appendix A** which shows flow of placements into Public Housing of all priority groups, showing the Minimum, Median, and Maximum time to placement in days.

Please note, that the 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 data is based upon clients who were recorded as residing in Buller, Grey, or Westland District on the date their social housing application went live. The data could include clients who were housed after a period on the Housing Register, the Transfer Register, or both.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding public housing in the West Coast region, 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.

Ngā mihi nui



Karen Hocking
**General Manager
Housing**



Appendix A

Table One: The number of primary applicants on the Public Housing Register in West Coast TLAs in the priority group A20 as at 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Quarter Ending	Territorial Authority	Priority A20	Total Public Housing Register
31 March 2020	Buller	0	33
	Grey	S	66
	Westland	0	21
	Total	S	114
31 March 2021	Buller	0	60
	Grey	S	84
	Westland	0	33
	Total	S	177

Table Two: The flow of placements for all priorities into Public Housing showing the Minimum, Median, and Maximum time to house, in days, during the quarters ending 31 March 2020 and at 31 March 2021.

Quarter ending	Territorial Authority	Public Housing			
		Number Housed	Median number of days to house	Minimum number of days to house	Maximum number of days to house
31 March 2020	Buller	S	339	135	543
	Grey	9	174	48	303
	Westland	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
31 March 2021	Buller	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Grey	S	32	33	33
	Westland	0	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes for Table One and Two:

- The Housing Register provides the number of applicants assessed as eligible for social housing who are ready to be matched to a suitable property.
- The Transfer Register provides the number of applicants who are housed but requiring to be matched to a different property.
- This includes applications on the Housing Register and Transfer Register.
- This only includes priority A and B applications. The A and B priority applications used in these tables are as at the end of the quarter and may have changed prior to this date.
- Priority A refers to applicants who are considered at risk and includes households with a severe and persistent housing need that must be addressed immediately.
- Priority B refers to applicants who have a serious housing need and includes households with a significant and persistent need.
- The priority and position may change throughout the application's time on the Register.
- Priority and Position are not a sole determinant of the order people will be housed as a suitable house will also need to be available
- Needs may include requirements such as number of bedrooms, accessibility requirements
- The median time to house is the midpoint of the time to house values.

Notes for Table One and Two (continued):

- Median time to house has been rounded up to the nearest full day.
- Minimum time to house has been rounded up to the nearest full day.
- Maximum time to house has been rounded up to the nearest full day.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- A value of one or two may be rounded to zero or three.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.
- 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'.