



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Dear

On 12 July 2021, you emailed the Department of Corrections requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many former prisoners were released into the West Coast in the last year (since July 2020)?*
 - *Of that number about how many have secured independent accommodation (i.e. houses/flats) and work*
 - *How many have been accommodated in social housing (i.e. motels).*

On 30 July 2021, this part of your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry).

The Ministry can only report on former prisoners if they applied for assistance from the Ministry once they had been released from prison. Out of these, on the question of whether they have secured accommodation, the Ministry can report the number of clients in receipt of a main benefit that also receive the Accommodation Supplement, as this indicates that the client has found accommodation.

There may be former prisoners who have secured accommodation without the assistance of the Ministry. As the Ministry cannot report on these, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and the Ministry has no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

Former prisoners may also have secured accommodation through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the form of transitional housing or public housing. However, this would not come under the term 'independent accommodation' which you used in your request.

Please find **Table One** enclosed, outlining the number of working age clients in receipt of a main benefit and Accommodation Supplement in the West Coast as at 30 June 2021, who were granted their main benefit due to their release from prison between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, broken down by accommodation tenure type.

Table One: The number of working age clients in receipt of a main benefit and Accommodation Supplement in the West Coast as at 30 June 2021, who were granted their main benefit due to their release from prison between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, broken down by accommodation tenure type.

Accommodation tenure type	Number of clients
Boarding	15
Renting	12
Not receiving Accommodation Supplement	9
Total	36

With regard to your question on whether former prisoners have secured work, the Ministry can report the number of cancellations of main benefits due to moving into employment of working age clients in the West Coast in the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2021 where the clients were granted their benefit in the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2021 due to their release from prison. There were 12 such cancellations in the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2021. Some of these clients may not have received the Accommodation Supplement from the Ministry.

Notes regarding the figures provided in this response:

- Main benefits exclude NZ Superannuation, Veteran's Pension, Non-Beneficiary assistance, Orphan's Benefit and Unsupported Child's Benefit.
- The figures include working age only (18 to 64 years).
- The count of main benefit cancellations due to 'work found' is a count of cancellations, not clients and the same client may have been cancelled into work more than once during the period.
- We establish that a client in the stock or the cancellations was a released prisoner if their event leading to the benefit grant was 'Prison Release' in the previous year.
- We establish TLA from the clients residential address
- We establish a client is in the West Coast if their Territorial Local Authority (TLA) is in the Westland, Grey, or Buller Districts. We establish TLA from the clients residential address
- 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. 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 2 counts.

The Ministry is unable to report the number of former prisoners in the West Coast who have received an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) from 1 July 2020, as it would be contained within the notes of individual case files and is not collated or held centrally. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of files. 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.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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 on the Ministry'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 former prisoners being released in the West Coast, 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

Bridget Saunders

Bridget Saunders
**Manager, Issue Resolution
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