



15 FEB 2021

On 18 December 2020, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) accepted a partial transfer from Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities (Kāinga Ora), of your request, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), for the following information:

- 1. How many emergency housing requests are currently active for people currently living within the Territorial Authority of Ruapehu?*
- 2. What percentage of people within the TA of Ruapehu who make an emergency housing request have to move out of district in order to access housing?*
- 3. How many people within the TA of Ruapehu are currently waiting for housing with Kāinga Ora?*

On 9 February 2021, the Ministry advised you our decision. Please note, at the time your request was refused as the Ministry did not believe we held the information that would meet the intent of your request. However, after further consideration, the information provided for question one does answer the question. As such, the decision has been revised and your request is partially granted.

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 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. More information about the Public 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 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.

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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html).

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 here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/living-expenses/housing.html).

The EH SNG is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place of 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 dependent on individual circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that Emergency Housing (EH) is not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation

For clarity, I will respond to each question in turn.

- 1. How many emergency housing requests are currently active for people currently living within the Territorial Authority of Ruapehu?*

The Special Needs Grant (SNG) is an additional income support that aims to address the immediate needs of families and individuals who are in hardship. Ministry clients are given a one-off payment to help with an essential or emergency cost, including housing.

The Ministry has interpreted your request as the number of clients who have received an EH SNG. Please note, due to the nature of motels and people checking in and out of accommodation. The grant information the Ministry holds doesn't necessarily reflect the current occupancy of EH in the area.

Please find **Table One** attached as **Appendix A**, showing the latest data available on the number of EH SNGs granted in 2020 for the Ruapehu District Territorial Local Authority (TLA).

You will note a sharp increase in the amount of EH SNGs between the quarters ending 30 March 2020 and 30 June 2020. The year 2020 saw a significant increase in demand for EH, 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.

- 2. What percentage of people within the TA of Ruapehu who make an emergency housing request have to move out of district in order to access housing?*

When assessing a client's eligibility for an EH SNG the Ministry works with them to find a suitable place to stay in the area they prefer. Ministry case managers will try to place clients in the same region that the visited Service Centre is located, which for the Ruapehu District TLA is the Rotorua Service Centre. The Ministry does not relocate

clients unless an absence of emergency accommodation in a particular location makes it necessary to do so in order to meet that need.

Ministry clients make their own choices about where they wish to reside. If a client chooses to relocate to a different region, the Ministry will try to assist in this move. However, the Ministry does not proactively relocate people for Emergency Housing.

To determine the percentile of people within the Ruapehu District TLA who have decided to move out of the district in order to access EH would require substantial manual collation, as this would be recorded in the individual notes in their client file.

In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually collate and review notes on client files, individually verify the address belonging to the EH supplier, and cross-reference if it is outside of the Ruapehu District TLA. As such, this part your request is refused 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.

*3. How many people within the TA of Ruapehu are currently waiting for housing with Kāinga Ora?*

The Ministry publishes a quarterly report showing the number of applicants of the Housing Register, which includes a breakdown by assessed priority, house demographics, and TLA.

The latest data, as at 30 September 2020, is available on the Ministry's website 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).

You will find the TLA breakdown in the excel file at the bottom of the webpage. The data for the December 2020 quarter is due to be published online in the coming weeks.

As such, your request for how many people within the Ruapehu District TLA are currently waiting for EH is refused under section 18(d) of the Act, on the basis that the information requested is, or will soon be, publicly available.

As the data for the December 2020 Quarter is still unavailable, you may be interested in the monthly updates published by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This includes information about applications of the Housing Register and the supply of Public and Transitional Housing.

HUD's most recent update, as at 30 November 2020, can be found here: [www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Follow-our-progress/Monthly-Dashboards-2020/November-2020-monthly-update.pdf](http://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Follow-our-progress/Monthly-Dashboards-2020/November-2020-monthly-update.pdf).

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 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 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 your request for information about Emergency Housing in the Ruapehu District Territorial Local Authority, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

  
Karen Hocking  
**General Manager, Housing**

## Appendix A

**Table One: Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020 for the Ruapehu District Territorial Local Authority, broken down by quarter ending, total grants, amount granted and the number of distinct clients**

Quarter Ending	RUAPEHU DISTRICT TLA		
	Total Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted
March 2020	16	8	\$11,441
June 2020	62	23	\$64,679
September 2020	40	16	\$47,432
December 2020	52	16	\$75,981

### Notes:

- This report only contains clients with a recorded residential address in the Ruapehu Territorial Local Authority.
- This contains counts of grants and clients.
- One client may have more than one Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant.
- Territorial Local Authority (TLA) is estimated based on the clients address at the time of the grant. It may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.
- Ungeocoded address records that are unable to be matched to a TLA through suburb and city details have an unknown TLA.
- Distinct clients should not be summed up across TLAs as they may be represented in multiple TLAs if regularly changing their address.
- Distinct Clients can be counted in more than one quarter if they have had grants in multiple quarters.
- The amount granted may not be the amount spent.