



25 MAY 2021

Tēnā koe

On 22 April 2021, you emailed Office of Hon Dr Megan Woods, Minister of Housing, requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. the average waiting time for an individual who is placed on the social housing list with an A.19 rating and the rough or estimate wait for a house, and*
- 2. information on how to apply for a parliamentary question in terms of process.*

Later that day, your request for official information was transferred to the Office on Hon Poto Williams, Associate Minister for Housing (Public Housing) under section 14 of Act.

On 23 April, you were advised that your request for the average waiting time for an individual who is placed on the Social Housing list was transferred, under section 14 of the Act, to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) to respond.

The Office of Hon Poto Williams also provided you with a link to the Parliament website which provides information on written and oral parliamentary questions.

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 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 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. The combined register is referred to as the Public Housing Register (the Register). While the Ministry completes the housing assessments which inform the Register, responsibility for funding and supply sits with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kāinga Ora, respectively. More information about the 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, this is captured as part of the assessment process.

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking public housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. This can include support to secure private rentals including rent and bond, Accommodation Supplement or Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG), for emergency housing.

EH SNGs are 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 dependant on individual circumstances.

The Ministry provides ongoing support to help people secure a long-term housing solution, including looking into public housing and private rental accommodation as an option, depending on the individual's circumstances. EH SNGs are short-term in nature. The policy is aimed at encouraging clients to continue to search for their own accommodation options.

More information about emergency housing can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

Public and Community housing providers are responsible for matching those on the Public Housing Register with available properties. It has discretion to select the household it believes will fit best with that property based on a number of factors. Because there is a shortage of appropriate public houses available to match the type of demand, households with a high housing need will not always necessarily be placed before other household with priority ratings. Further, often the factors that cause a household to be in high housing need will be the very factors that work against it in the selection and placement process. For example, a large family that requires a modified house in an area where there are few public houses available would have more difficulty is being placed than a household with a lower priority rating in an area with greater supply of public houses.

To answer your question regarding the median waiting time in days for an individual who is placed on the social housing list with an A.19 rating, for quarter ending 31 March 2021, please see **Table One** enclosed:

Table One: The median waiting time in days for an individual who is placed on the social housing list with an A.19 rating, for quarter ending 31 March 2021.

Quarter Ending	A.19
31 March 2021	295

Notes:

- The Housing Register provides the number of applicants assessed as eligible for social housing who are ready to be matched to a suitable property.
- This only includes applications on the Housing Register and does not include applications on the Transfer Register.

- 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 and position are as at the time the application was housed.
- The priority and position may have changed 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 and accessibility requirements.
- The median time to house is the midpoint of the time to house values.
- Median time to house has been rounded up to the nearest full day.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding the average waiting time for an individual who is placed on the social housing list, 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
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Housing**