



14 December 2022

Tēnā koe

On 4 November 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Could you please provide the amount spent on emergency accommodation in Buller across the last five years including month-on-month breakdowns for the following: - What commercial accommodation providers have been/are providing emergency housing and when?*
 - *How long each has been used for?*
 - *How many people were housed at these sites monthly*
 - *Total paid to each provider monthly?*
- *On average, how long is the current stay in emergency accommodation in Buller?*
- *Can MSD provide a comment about how the last 12 months of Buller figures compare to the 12 months prior and the trend of the last five years?*

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.

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (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. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual 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/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html.

Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time. Please note that the Ministry does not hold any contracts or official agreements or arrangements with any emergency housing provider outside of Rotorua.

There is also a distinct group of people that face a range of complex issues that are a barrier, such as mental health and addictions, criminal history, or family violence. There are still others that need to live in a specific area, due to the need to access specialist care or educational needs for them or their family.

For people with high and complex needs, it can sometimes be challenging to identify suitable long-term housing, which can lead to longer stays in emergency housing. Work and Income works closely with these people to see what can be done to ensure that once they have a home of their own, they have the skills to sustain it, and the support they need to keep it.

Please find attached, an **Excel Spreadsheet** which contains the following tables:

- **Table 1:** List of suppliers for clients granted Emergency Housing for five years from 1 July 2017 to 30 September 2022 in the Buller District. The date of first grant is provided to show how long the supplier has been providing emergency housing.
- **Table 2:** The number of grants, clients and amount granted for Emergency Housing in the Buller District between 1 July 2017 and 30 September 2022. You have asked how many people were housed at these sites each month. The Ministry does not record a monthly summary of the number of people housed with a particular EH supplier.

However, we have provided you with the number of grants and clients for each supplier.

- **Table 3:** You asked how long the average current stay is in emergency accommodation in Buller. The table provides the average consecutive weeks stay in Emergency Housing in the Buller District between 1 July 2017 and 30 September 2022. The data is provided for quarters rather than months because the monthly figures are so low, they could be suppressed. This information is in line with advice the Ministry provided to you on 6 December 2021.

You will note in **Table 1 and Table 2** that the information regarding an individual or some individuals is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

With regard to your request for a Ministry comment about how the last 12 months of Buller figures compare with the 12 months prior, you may appreciate that the floods of July 2021 and February 2022 have impacted the housing situation in Buller.

Unfortunately, the housing shortage continues throughout New Zealand and is extremely challenging. For some time now, the Ministry's housing priorities have been to find housing for the homeless, longer-term housing for those in emergency accommodation and more suitable housing for the elderly, the very young, the disabled and people with other health conditions and issues.

You may be aware that work is underway across the Ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, to ensure the Government has a cohesive approach to accessible housing. To help increase the supply of public housing, including accessible public housing, HUD has published a Public Housing Plan. You can read more about this in the following link: www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/increasing-public-housing/public-housing-plan/.

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 and the attached documents 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, 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



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