



24 May 2022

Tēnā koe

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

- 1. A list of motel addresses in Auckland that have been utilised by MSD for emergency housing in the last 5 years. If the actual addresses cannot be provided for privacy reasons, please provide the suburb only.*
- 2. The value of rents paid to each motel per annum (\$ per annum) over the last 5 years.*
- 3. The number of rooms and beds for each motel.*
- 4. The criteria for which MSD assesses motel suitability - if any.*

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 and 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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html).

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will address your questions as follows:

- 1. A list of motel addresses in Auckland that have been utilised by MSD for emergency housing in the last 5 years. If the actual addresses cannot be provided for privacy reasons, please provide the suburb only.*
- 2. The value of rents paid to each motel per annum (\$ per annum) over the last 5 years.*

Please see attached an Excel Spreadsheet which includes **Table One** outlining a list of Emergency Housing suppliers in the Auckland Super City Territorial Local Authority (TLA) and the EH SNG amount granted in the last 5 years, 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021. The Ministry is unable to identify 'Motels' from Emergency Housing suppliers as this is not standard reporting. In order to provide you with this information, the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collation. 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 requests 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.

In the spirit of being helpful, you have been provided with all Emergency Housing Suppliers in the Auckland Super City TLA.

Regarding the tables provided, please note that the TLA is estimated based on the clients' address at the time of the grant. This TLA may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing supplier. Where the client address is not recorded, the location of the Ministry's service centre case managing the client has been used to approximate which TLA a client resides in. However, as the Ministry has switched to working from national queues, EH SNGs and other hardship grants could be granted by a case manager working anywhere in New Zealand. Therefore, in such cases, the TLA may not reflect the actual client address or location. Due to the transient nature

of people receiving EH SNGs, the recorded address for a client may also be that of a trusted family member or friend who receives mail on their behalf.

You will note that the registered supplier name is the name of the parent company of the accommodation supplier, and not necessarily the name of the accommodation itself. One registered supplier may provide accommodation across multiple premises in different locations or trading names, receiving payment through the single supplier record.

You will also note that some suppliers may be listed due to a coding error when a client receives multiple assistance payments at one point in time, for example for petrol or groceries.

Please note that some information in **Table One** has been 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.

Regarding your request for the addresses of the suppliers, this is refused under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons.

The Ministry is also unable to provide you with the suburbs of these suppliers as this would require as the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collation. 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 requests 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. The number of rooms and beds for each motel.*

The Ministry does not record the number of rooms and beds for each motel. As such, your request has been refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or interdepartmental Venture or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.

### *4. The criteria for which MSD assesses motel suitability - if any.*

When supporting clients to access emergency housing, the Ministry works with clients to identify emergency housing options best suited to their individual circumstances at the time of their application. Clients also often have their own preferences for where they wish to stay, which we consider.

When a supplier of commercial accommodation registers as a supplier with the Ministry, the address recorded is often that of their head office or central site. Our supplier information does not include reportable data regarding the geographical location or premises that each specific grant relates to. The use of particular suppliers can change over time as availability of options change or identified issues are addressed.

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'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 Emergency Housing Suppliers in the Auckland Super City TLA, 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  
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Housing**