



7 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 19 December 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The contact details of the person responsible for making accommodations for MSD clients with disabilities;*
- *Information about the process for applying for a relocation;*
- *Information about how MSD monitors the standards of accommodation used as emergency housing*

I understand that you have requested further information on behalf of a client. Those aspects of your request do not fall under the Act, and this letter therefore only addresses your requests for official information as set out above. You can expect a response from the appropriate officials in due course for your remaining questions about your client.

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and many 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.

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.

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 work 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.

I will now address your questions in turn, for the sake of clarity.

- *The contact details of the person responsible for making accommodations for MSD clients with disabilities;*

There is not a specific Ministry staff member that assists disabled clients with accommodations. All clients can discuss accommodations and support with Ministry staff by either visiting a Work and Income service centre or contacting the Ministry by phone on 0800 599 009.

- *Information about the process for applying for a relocation;*

The Ministry's priority is to ensure individuals and whānau who are homeless are given a roof over their heads. The Ministry works hard to ensure emergency accommodation is appropriate for these people in their unique circumstances. Where there are concerns or issues about suitability, Ministry staff work with the client to resolve these.

A client may move between EH providers for various reasons. I have outlined below some examples where movement may be considered.

If whānau in emergency housing need extra support, they may be assigned an Integrated Services Case Manager (ISCM). ISCMs help clients stabilise and access the necessary products, services and supports they need while staying in emergency housing, including resolving issues of suitability and arranging transfers of accommodation providers where necessary.

An EH occupant can contact any Ministry staff member to lodge a complaint about an EH supplier. Once the complaint has been lodged, it is managed by the appropriate Regional Housing Manager or delegated staff member. The Regional Housing Manager will determine whether there are any immediate safety risks for the occupant and decide whether the occupant needs to be relocated to another EH supplier. The Ministry will work with the occupant and supplier to resolve the complaint, where possible.

If a client receiving an EH SNG nominates a different EH provider when applying for a further grant, the Ministry will assess the client's EH SNG application in line with general process.

The Ministry works alongside clients to support a housing solution that meets their needs, though the choice of where someone lives is ultimately their own to make.

More information about how we support people into housing is available here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/index.html.

- *Information about how MSD monitors the standards of accommodation used as emergency housing*

Those who supply emergency accommodation to our clients are expected to meet all the relevant regulatory standards imposed by regulatory authorities, including local councils. As such, the Ministry does not carry out regular inspections of the commercial businesses that supply emergency accommodation to our clients.

Where concerns are raised to the Ministry about the quality of accommodation, regional managers follow this up directly with the supplier to resolve any issues around quality or service. Where issues cannot be resolved in a timely way, suitable alternative accommodation will be sought for the client.

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.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Emergency Housing processes, 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**