



9 January 2023

Tēnā koe

On 20 November 2022, you emailed the Prime Minister's requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

*"The media has reported that under your watch some 3,000 homeless persons have been living in government paid motel accomodation for in excess of three years,which if correct, we ask why have you not housed these persons in state owned homes to give them better lives and save the taxpayer the huge cost of your policy".*

*Please also confirm;*

*"the annual cost incurred by taxpayers for those living under such conditions under your policy,as we are concerned that the cost is excessive and hurting our economy,as we Superannuitants for example are in desperate need of a basic rate adjustment to assist our living standards, a reality that you overlook, showing you are out of touch with reality and damaging our society".*

On 30 November 2022, your request was transferred to the Office of Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister of Social Development and Employment as the information requested is more closely connected to the functions of the Minister.

On 2 December 2022, you emailed the Minister of Social Development & Employment requesting the following, additional information:

*The media suggest large numbers of young children are also being housed in motels as part of the homeless persons crisis,and ask that you confirm the age profile of those under 15 years of age,how long have they been in this form of accomodation for each of the last three years",as it concerns us that young children are living in such circumstances because you have not built sufficient housing to solve the problem.*

The parts of your request that relate to the number of people living in emergency housing and the amount of money spent on emergency housing will be responded to by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry). The other parts of your request will be responded to by the Minister of Social Development & Employment and the Minister of Housing.

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 depending on individual circumstances.

After seven nights, another appointment is arranged between the client and Work and Income 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](http://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 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.

There are also a distinct group of people that face a range of complex issues that are a barrier, such as mental health or addiction, 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 work closely with these people to see what can be done to ensure that once they have a home of their own, they are able to retain it, and the support they need to keep it.

For the sake of clarity, your questions will be addressed in turn below.

*Please also confirm the annual cost incurred by taxpayers for those living under such conditions [ie those living in paid motel accommodation] under your policy.*

Information about the Ministry's expenditure for clients that have been granted an EH SNG is publicly available and can be found by following this link on the Ministry's website: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/monthly-housing-reporting.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/monthly-housing-reporting.html)

*Confirm the age profile of those under 15 years of age, how long have they been in this form of accommodation for each of the last three years.*

The Ministry does not report on the ethnicity or ages of children in emergency housing, nor does the Ministry report on how long children have been in emergency housing. Therefore, I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information you had requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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 about emergency housing costs and those under 15 living in emergency housing, 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**