



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

13 January 2023

Tēnā koe

On 3 November 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) with a letter attached, requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). You have asked for information relating to housing in the Waikato region, and I have set out each of your individual questions below.

On 21 November 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise that more time was required to respond to your request for information. The reasons for the extension were that consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were such that a proper response to the request could not reasonably be made within the original time limit and, the request is for a large quantity of official information or necessitates a search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the Ministry.

Demand for housing across New Zealand continues to grow 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 depending on individual circumstances.

After seven nights, Work and Income arranges 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 what 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 here: 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.

There is also a distinct group of people that faces 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.

As you will appreciate, New Zealand's housing shortage 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 interested to know that work is underway across the Ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, to ensure a cohesive Government 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/.

With regard to your requests for information, in the attached spreadsheets are numbered tables, 1 to 6. For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your questions in turn.

Question 1:

- *A breakdown for each respective calendar year being January 2017 through to September 2022 which provides details of client beneficiary type being:*
 - *Non-Beneficiaries*
 - *Youth Payment (YP)*
 - *Young Parent Payment (YPP)*
 - *Job Seeker (JS)*
 - *Sole Parent Support (SPS)*
 - *Supported Living Payment (SLP)*

Broken down with the following recorded information:

- *For each respective year and benefit type the number of clients aged 16yrs, 17yrs, 18yrs,19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs and 24yrs at the time made application via submission of a SNG/RAP form for Emergency Housing Support for the Waikato Territorial Local Authority (TLA).*

For easier reading, data is provided in two tables. **Table One** shows the number of EHSNG applications processed for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region from 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2022 by benefit type. **Table Two** shows the number of EHSNG applications processed for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region from 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2022 by client age.

Question 2:

- *For each respective year and benefit type the number of clients aged 16yrs, 17yrs, 18yrs,19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs and 24yrs at the time made application via submission of a SNG/RAP form for Emergency Housing Support for 7 days or more and were accepted*

For easier reading, data is provided in two tables. **Table Three** shows the number of EHSNGs granted for 7 nights or more for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region from 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2022 by benefit type. **Table Four** shows the number of EHSNGs granted for 7 nights or more for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region by age.

Question 3:

- *For each respective year and benefit type the number of clients aged 16yrs, 17yrs, 18yrs,19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs and 24yrs at the*

time made application via submission of a SNG/RAP form for Emergency Housing Support for 7 days or more and were declined

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. 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 request 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.

Question 4:

- For each respective year and benefit type the average number of nights stay of clients aged 16yrs, 17yrs, 18yrs, 19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs and 24yrs in Emergency housing*

For easier reading, data is provided in two tables. **Table Five** shows the average consecutive weeks for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region TLA from 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2022, broken down by calendar year and benefit type. **Table Six** shows the average consecutive weeks for clients aged 16 to 24 in the Waikato Region TLA from 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2022, broken down by calendar year and age.

Question 5:

- For each respective year and benefit type the number of clients aged 16yrs,17yrs, 18yrs,19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs, 24yrs who reapplied via submission of a SNG/RAP form for Emergency Housing Support after previously being confirmed as obtaining secure accommodation within 3 months, 6 months, 12 months*

I am unable to provide you with this information as it is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act. 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 request 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.

Question 6:

- *For each respective year and benefit type the number of clients aged 16yrs, 17yrs, 18yrs, 19yrs, 20yrs, 21yrs, 22yrs, 23yrs, 24yrs who were placed into a Transitional Housing placement*

We emailed you on 22 December 2022 to advise that part of this question was transferred to Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as they are responsible for Transitional Housing. We further advised that while HUD records data about Transitional Housing but not *benefit type* data, our Ministry records *benefit type* data but not data about Transitional Housing. Therefore, I confirm that your request for data about benefit type of clients placed into transitional housing is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you requested is not held by the Ministry in that format 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.

You will hear from HUD separately about the information they may be able to provide to you.

Question 7:

- *For each respective year and benefit type the number of all clients who made application for emergency housing support and were approved for Emergency Housing accommodation within Hamilton City who would otherwise reside outside of the Hamilton City Boundaries which includes:*
 - *a breakdown based on age*
 - *beneficiary type and*
 - *at the time of application their normal place of residence and WINZ office was Huntly, Ngaruawahia, Matamata, Morrinsville, Paeroa, Waihi, Thames, Te Awamutu or Cambridge*

The Ministry does not hold information identifying specifically where a supplier is situated. Some suppliers are registered with us via PO Boxes or central addresses for multiple providers. This means that the supplier could be located anywhere in New Zealand or even in multiple locations across New Zealand.

At the same time, when a person applies for emergency housing, the Ministry does not record data about whether the applicant moved to a particular area seeking accommodation.

Your request is therefore refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you 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.

Regarding the tables provided, please note that the Territorial Local Authority (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.

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 in the Waikato Region, 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
**Group General Manager
Housing**