

24 February 2025

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 3 February 2025, requesting information about the number of households in emergency housing in the Wellington region and nationally.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

- 1. How many households were living in emergency housing on these dates (1 Dec 2023 and 1 June 2024), in the Wellington region? How many tamariki?*
- 2. How many households were living in emergency housing in the Wellington region on 25 August 2024, and how many were as at 1 February 2025? How many tamariki?*
- 3. How many households were living in emergency housing nationally on 25 August 2024, and how many were as at 1 February 2025? How many tamariki?*

The Ministry's standard reporting is as at the end of each month. Please see the attached **Appendix**, which contains:

- **Table 1:** Number of clients receiving Emergency Housing as at months ending 31 January 2023 to 31 January 2025, by month, Territorial Local Authority (TLA) and household composition; and,
- **Table 2:** Number of grants, and amount granted for Emergency Housing from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025, by month, Territorial Local Authority (TLA) and household composition.

Please note, in order to protect client privacy, some values in **Tables 1** and **2** are suppressed and represented by an 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact numbers as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

4. *If the 1 February figures are lower than the 25 August figures (for both questions 2 and 3), were the trends downwards consistent over the intervening five months? Or is 1 February an anomaly?*

You will note there is a consistent downward trend between 31 August 2024 and 21 January 2025. The government is committed to ending the large-scale and long-term use of motels for emergency housing, aiming to restore it as a last resort for short periods.

In March 2024, Ministers announced changes to tighten the emergency housing gateway and strengthen processes for those entering emergency housing, including increased scrutiny by Ministry staff to assess whether applicants had unreasonably contributed to their immediate housing need.

Following a legislative change in July, further adjustments were introduced in August to ensure emergency housing is reserved for those with no other options. This included introducing new responsibilities for individuals staying in Emergency Housing longer than a week.

5. *On each of the dates mentioned above (1 December 2023, 1 June 2024, 25 August 2024 and 1 February 2025), how many emergency housing spaces were available, both in the Wellington region and nationally?*

Your request for occupancy of the emergency housing suppliers is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds to believe that this information is either held by or more closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry does not contract motels to provide emergency housing, nor does it record the number of rooms available at any given time. Businesses register with the Ministry to receive payments and may opt into the EH supplier standards; however, this does not establish a contractual relationship between the supplier and the Ministry. As a result, the Ministry does not maintain records of occupancy or availability of emergency housing spaces.

6. *For those that left emergency housing between 1 Dec 2023 and 1 June 2024, and again between 25 August 2024 and 1 Feb 2025, in the Wellington region, is it possible to get a breakdown of where the households went? I.e. what % went into social housing provided by Kāinga Ora, vs elsewhere.*

The Ministry can identify where around 80 percent of those leaving emergency housing go (this is up from 50 percent since December 2023).

Of the households that have exited emergency housing (excluding contracted emergency housing) since June 2024:

- 35 percent left emergency housing into Social Housing.
- 20 percent had moved into Transitional Housing.
- 24 percent were receiving the Accommodation Supplement for a private rental.

Formal reporting on where people go when they leave emergency housing is still under development and is not currently part of the Ministry's regular reporting.

The Ministry is working to develop official reporting on emergency housing exits. However, this requires linking information from multiple systems, agencies, and organisations as those leaving emergency housing are not obliged to tell the Ministry where they go.

On 26 August 2024, the Ministry introduced changes to tighten the Gateway to Emergency Housing.

The Gateway changes shift emergency housing to a more rules-based approach and ensures that emergency housing grants are targeted to those in genuine need that have met their responsibilities. This includes the establishment of responsibilities as eligibility criteria, and a non-entitlement period of 13-weeks if an applicant has not met their responsibilities, after two warnings and when no good or sufficient reason for exemption applies.

*7. How many people were declined emergency housing accommodation in the Wellington region in each month of 2024, and in January 2025?*

Please see the attached **Appendix** and refer to **Table 3** for the number of declines for emergency housing from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025, by month and Territorial Local Authority (TLA).

The Ministry's practice and data capture in respect of emergency housing declines has improved, with all applications now having the result recorded, providing greater transparency for clients. However, this makes it difficult to compare data pre/post implementation of the new rules for entry into emergency housing.

The variation in decline rates is expected. When people first present for emergency housing, staff test the availability of alternative accommodation options (e.g. staying with whanau and friends) to determine eligibility for the Emergency Housing Grant. It is important to note that over 85% of all people applying for emergency housing get some form of housing support.

Where clients have been declined emergency housing, they may be offered other forms of assistance such as the Accommodation Supplement, Bond Grant, Moving Costs Grant, Costs (rent) in Advance Grant or Tenancy Costs Cover Grant For more information, see here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/housing-support-products/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/housing-support-products/index.html).

Please note, in order to protect client privacy, some values in **Table 3** are suppressed and represented by an 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact numbers as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request regarding 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

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Graham', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anna Graham  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**