



1 July 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 5 June 2025, requesting information about children exiting emergency housing.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

1. How many houses were those 3,438 children moved into?

From 30 April 2024 the Ministry introduced an emergency housing fast-track for eligible applicants on the social housing register. This ensures families with dependent children in emergency housing for extended periods (12 weeks or more) are prioritised on the social housing waitlist.

Please see the following link for the April 2025 monthly housing report:

www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/monthly-housing-update/2025/monthly-housing-report-april-2025.pdf

As at 30 April 2025, there have been 996 households and 2,124 children placed into social housing under the Priority One category since it began.

2. How many of the houses were in Hamilton?

As at 30 April 2025, there have been 171 households and 411 children placed into social housing under the Priority One category since it began.

Please note that the above numbers are restricted to households with the Priority One Fast Track tag and does not represent all emergency housing exits.

3. Regarding the 3438 children referred to by the Minister, does the government know where all those children went after they left emergency housing? If so, where did they all go? That is, are they all in Kainga Ora housing or are some in KO housing and some in private rentals etc?

The '3,438 children' cited by the Minister refers to the number of children who were in emergency housing as of the end of December 2023.

When a client applies for an emergency housing grant, the client will provide Ministry staff with the total number of adults and children who will likely be staying the emergency accommodation with them.

No other information that identifies the relationships of these adults and children to the applicant is recorded for an emergency housing grant application, nor is

confirmation of whether the children and/or adults will be staying in emergency accommodation for the duration of stay that the emergency housing grant is for.

Clients receiving an emergency housing grant may have complex family or caregiver relationships, and it is not uncommon for children of one parent to stay with another family member or there could be scenarios where the same child is recorded in multiple grant applications, (i.e., both parents are in separate emergency accommodation at the same time).

The Ministry is not able to track the outcomes of specific children, however of the households that exited emergency housing (excluding Contracted Emergency Housing) during December 2024:

- 37 percent left emergency housing to go into Social Housing (4 percent through Community Housing Providers (CHP), 33 percent through Kāinga Ora)
- 29 percent had moved into Transitional Housing
- 19 percent were receiving the Accommodation Supplement for a private rental (this includes clients with mortgage, private rental or board costs)
- 14 percent did not access any of these housing-related services.

4. *As a result of the 'priority one decision' referenced in the answer, is it more difficult to get into emergency housing now than it was in 2022 or 2023? If so, why is it more difficult now? That is, what criteria has been changed?*

On 26 August 2024, the Ministry introduced changes to the eligibility criteria for emergency housing.

People need to exhaust all other options before they are eligible for emergency housing, including staying with family or friends, viewing private rentals and applying for them, or accepting other supports MSD is able to offer, such as Transitional Housing.

The 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.

The changes:

- introduce new information requirement powers to enable the Ministry to verify applicant eligibility and whether they have met their responsibilities.
- establish 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.
- revoke the Ministry's ability to make emergency housing grants recoverable.
- remove the Ministry's discretion to grant, despite responsibilities not being met, on the basis that declining a grant would worsen the applicant's position, increase risk to the applicant's (or immediate family's) welfare, or cause serious hardship.

The verification processes for those entering emergency housing have been strengthened. MSD look more closely at whether someone applying for Emergency

Housing has contributed to their housing need, if they can stay in their current accommodation, whether they have previously paid their emergency housing contribution, and their responsibility to look for and accept offers of suitable accommodation, including private rentals and transitional housing.

Anyone who disagrees with a decision we've made can challenge it, including whether to provide an emergency housing grant. You can read more about this here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/feedback-and-complaints/review-of-decisions.html

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.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request regarding emergency housing exits, 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

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