



21 March 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your three emails of 21 February 2025, requesting information about various aspects of Emergency Housing.

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

OIA 1:

- *The number of people (and/or households?) who left emergency housing in 2024.*
- *The amount of Accommodation Supplement paid to people who have left emergency housing in 2024?*
- *Can you then also provide the cost for emergency housing for the same time frame? In a way that can compare the two types of housing costs.*

As stated in the previous response to you dated 17 January 2025, the Ministry is unable to report on the number of people/households who have left emergency housing in 2024, and this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

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.

Your request for the amount of Accommodation Supplement paid out to people who have left emergency housing in 2024 is very broad, and substantial manual collation would be required to locate and prepare all information within scope of your request. 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.

OIA 2:

- *It states the practice and data capture in respect of emergency housing declines has improved (thus making it difficult to compare the data pre/post implementation of new rules) – does that mean that data from pre August 26 is NOT a correct indication of how many declines there were? Are there likely to be more or less? Can you provide a statement on this please.*
- *It states the 'variation in decline rates is expected.' That is, that there is an increase in decline rates after August?*
- *It states that since the tightening of the gateway, around 85% of all people applying for emergency housing are granted some form of housing support. So, from that, can you please provide:*
- *The total number of people applying for emergency housing support each month last year (this will need to be an OIA, I understand).*
- *And also, prior to the tightening of the gateway, what that percentage is?*

The reason it is difficult to compare declines of emergency housing applications pre and post August 2024 is that on 26 August 2024, the Ministry introduced changes to tighten the gateway to emergency housing. This included additional decline reasons to align with the emergency housing eligibility changes.

It is likely that information about emergency housing declines collected prior to 26 August 2024 represents an under-count of those declined assistance.

Data on the numbers of emergency housing grants, declines, total applications received in 2024 and total emergency housing expenditure broken down by month, is provided in the attached **Appendix: Data on Emergency Housing applications**.

Your request for the percentage of people who applied for emergency housing who received some form of housing assistance prior to the tightening of the gateway is refused under section 18(f) of the Act as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information. This information would only be contained within individual client files, which would require manual review of each client file to respond to your request. 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.

OIA 3:

- *Hi there – Can I just ask, re the 'reason for declines' table, it states:*
- *Circumstances could have been reasonably foreseen*
- *Not a qualifying need*
- *The need can be met in another way*
- *as some of the main reasons for declines.*
- *Can you please provide an explanation for each? And in terms of the 'not a qualifying need' - how is that assessed?*

Circumstances could have been reasonable foreseen:

People are generally expected to organise somewhere new to live before they leave their existing accommodation and may not be granted emergency housing if they have not done so.

Not a qualifying need:

The applicant is not without adequate shelter, or they are seeking a place to stay for a short period e.g. attending a funeral.

The need can be met in another way:

The applicant is required to explore various options, for example staying with family or friends. The Ministry will explore any other assistance that would help them stay in their home (e.g. a food grant, an advance and /or Housing Support Products) and will ensure they are receiving their full and correct entitlement.

More information can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/emergency-housing/index.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, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line.

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services