



26 JUL 2016

Dear

On 20 May 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information about emergency housing and wait times for social housing.

As you are aware, the Government has recently announced funding for 3000 emergency housing places per year, allocating \$41.1 million over the next four years for both contracted emergency housing providers and a new emergency housing grant which will be available from July 2016. This new Special Needs Grant for emergency housing does not need to be paid back. This can be paid for up to seven days while people work with us to identify alternative housing options.

For the sake of clarity, I will address your questions in turn.

- *How many people needed to be put up in hotels/motels for the last quarter and for the past year?*
- *How many people needed to be put up in emergency housing in last quarter and for past year?*

The Ministry is still developing its reporting systems for social housing. In 2015, the Ministry transitioned from using Housing New Zealand's IT system to its own internal IT system. This has meant that, generally, the Ministry can only produce snapshot reports. Reporting on, and tracking people, through the housing continuum is more complicated.

In future the new dedicated non recoverable Special Needs Grant will allow the Ministry to more accurately track demand for emergency housing assistance.

However at this time, I am unable to provide you with the number of people who required emergency accommodation (and the type of accommodation) in the last quarter and for the past year.

While the Ministry records the type of hardship assistance provided for accommodation, it does not separate out if that assistance is for emergency housing. Details about the type of accommodation assistance provided are recorded on notes in clients file. To provide this information, Ministry staff would need to review thousands of files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

- *Wait times for people (under the OIA if needed)*
- *Any other stats about times to wait for social housing and accommodation*

The Social Housing Register is not static. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher.

All social housing applicants are contacted by the Ministry at least once every 30 days. Regularly checking an applicant's circumstances ensures they remain eligible for social housing and their housing needs are up-to-date.

The table below shows the number of offers accepted and the average time to accept an offer of social housing, by register priority, for quarters ending 31 December 2015 and 31 March 2016, nationally.

Quarter ended	Priority A		Priority B		Priority A and B	
	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed	Number of applications housed	Average days to be housed
December 2015	1,243	141.3	170	168.2	1,413	144.5
March 2016	1,250	139.9	190	172.8	1,440	144.3

Please note that since September 2015, the time to house has been defined as the number of days it takes to activate a tenancy from the time an application is first registered on the Social Housing Register. Previously, Housing New Zealand measured the number of days it took for an applicant to receive an offer of housing from the time the application was first registered on the Social Housing Register.

Prior to August 2015 social housing application information was recorded in Housing New Zealand's Kotahi Nortgate information system. In August 2015 social housing application information was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development's Client Management System (CMS). Due to the differences between the two systems, it would be difficult to determine whether an application lodged in Housing New Zealand's system has been on the social housing register continuously, or whether the individual had made multiple applications for social housing over the period in question.

Please note the A and B priority applications noted in this response are as at the time the applicant began their tenancy and may have changed prior to this date. The average number of days it takes for an applicant to be housed is the number of days between beginning a tenancy from the point they were first confirmed live on the Social Housing Register as an 'A' or 'B' priority. An applicant's time to house will be reported as whichever priority category they were last registered as before beginning a tenancy. The average days to house is calculated on calendar days. Again, it is important to note that the data below may over-state the longest time to activate a social tenancy due to the difficulty involved in differentiating applications received by Housing New Zealand from those placed on the register by the Ministry of Social Development after August 2015. The Ministry continues to refine its reporting on

applications for social housing to ensure that data can be reported consistently across both (HNZ and MSD) information systems.

The table below shows nationally the longest time to activate a tenancy by register priority for quarters ending 31 December 2015 and 31 March 2016.

Quarter	Priority	Longest days to house nationally
December 2015	B	1,008
December 2015	A	2,591
March 2016	B	2,010
March 2016	A	1,806

In each case the circumstances of the applicant changed while they were on the register. Those changes affected the applicants respective priority ratings and impacted on the time it took them to receive an offer of housing.

It is important to understand that the Social Housing Register is not a time ranked waitlist, rather applicants assessed as being in the most urgent need will be matched to a property first. Unfortunately I am unable to disclose any further information about these individual cases due to privacy reasons, however each case had a complex history.

The length of time a client remains on the Social Housing Register can be dependent on a number of reasons. For example, a client may remain on the social housing register for a longer period of time where they have very specific preferences about where they want to be housed, change the region they wish to live in, or seek housing in areas which have high demand. Additionally, when a client is offered suitable housing and they decline, this will result in the client remaining on the Social Housing Register for a longer duration.

More information about the Social Housing Register can be accessed here: <http://www.housing.ms.govt.nz/information-for-housing-providers/register/index.html>

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 after ten working days. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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.

I hope you find this information helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Crafar', written over a horizontal line.

Carl Crafar
Deputy Chief Executive, Social Housing