



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

25 FEB 2019



On 21 January 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- 1. The date that WINZ commenced referring clients to Workotel*
- 2. Total number of referrals on a monthly basis from the initial referral to date*
- 3. The number of WINZ clients currently accommodated at 15-19 Main South Road*
- 4. Details of the contractual arrangements between Workotel and WINZ including copies of any correspondence or signed contract/supply agreement*
- 5. Details of WINZ's policy relating to the eligibility criteria for temporary housing*
- 6. Are the clients referred to Workotel unemployed or are some of them in paid employment*
- 7. Are there any restrictions in the type of clients referred to Workotel*
- 8. Have there been any complaints about WINZ clients accommodated at 15-19 Main South Road? For example, have any clients had to be moved out due to unacceptable behaviour?*
- 9. When referring clients to accommodation providers do you seek any assurance/ confirmation that the accommodation provider is legally allowed to provide this type of accommodation? Did this happen with Workotel? If so can you provide all information you hold in relation to this.*

On 22 January 2019, [REDACTED] Service Centre Manager Housing responded to question one and questions three through to nine listed above. Question two was referred to the Ministry's Data Team at National Office for reply under the Official Information Act.

Your request has been interpreted as the number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) paid in respect of people staying at Workotel for each Quarter from July 2016.

On 1 July 2016, the Ministry introduced an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) which is paid directly to the accommodation provider. This Grant 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. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights, but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances. In most cases, the grant does not need to be repaid.

The Ministry are unable to provide you with the number of EH SNG referrals to Workotel by month. In order to protect client privacy, values under five would be suppressed under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. As many months have less than five referrals, this information would be withheld.

Please find attached Table One which shows the total number of EH SNG referrals made to Workotel, broken down by quarter. In order to protect client privacy, values under five are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number 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 the information.

In Table One, the Ministry has also provided you with the number of distinct clients and the total amount granted on EH SNG's for Workotel between 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2018.

Before the December 2016 quarter, emergency housing-related grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants' which included hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. The Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category before the December 2016 quarter as it is recorded in notes on individual case files.

In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would need to manually review thousands of files. As such, your request for information about the number of referrals between July 2016 to December 2016 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.

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.

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 shortly. 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.

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 or the previous response you received regarding Workotel, 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cassandra Wise', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cassandra Wise
Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery

Table one: Number and amount of Emergency Hardship Special Needs Grants granted during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2018 paid to 'Workotel Limited' by Quarter

Quarter ending	Number of unique clients	Number of grants	Total Amount
Dec-16	28	58	\$18,998.52
Mar-17	25	36	\$13,523.00
Jun-17	24	47	\$13,604.42
Sep-17	24	33	\$9,595.00
Dec-17	23	25	\$6,025.64
Mar-18	18	23	\$8,119.00
Jun-18	23	38	\$12,610.00
Sep-18	22	24	\$7,348.50
Dec-18	S	S	\$905.00

Notes:

- Hardship payments reported here are Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) paid under the Emergency Housing need code.
- This represents a count of grants not individuals as the same person can have more than one Emergency Housing Grant.
- In certain circumstances low numbers can potentially lead to individuals being identified. Due to these privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated. 'S' represents a value that has been suppressed to protect the privacy of natural persons.