



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



Dear 

On 7 December 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information regarding Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants in Palmerston North and nationally, and complaints about Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant clients as guests in motels.

On 11 December 2018, it was clarified you were interested in this information for the most recent quarter and the most recent 12 months available.

People come to the Work and Income for urgent help with housing for a variety of reasons. They may be homeless or their current accommodation may be inadequate or unsuitable. They may have employment or family issues, be under financial stress, have medical or other special needs, neighbourhood or safety issues, be facing eviction or be at the end of their tenancy and unable to find somewhere else to live. When someone urgently needs housing, the Ministry's first preference is to find them a place with a provider of Transitional Housing. Transitional Housing is short-term in nature, and a stepping stone to long-term, sustainable housing. However, where all suitable Transitional Housing places are full, the Ministry can help to meet the cost of short-term accommodation with an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (SNG).

On 1 July 2016, the Ministry introduced a non-recoverable Emergency Housing SNG. The Ministry pays Emergency Housing SNGs directly to the accommodation provider, for instance a motel. 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 dependent on individual circumstances. In most cases that grant does not need to be repaid by the client.

Your questions are addressed in turn below:

- *Could you please let me know how many people Winz has placed in Palmerston North motels, and nationally, at any given point in time?*

Please see the two tables overleaf which address this request.

Table 1: The number of Special Needs Grants for Emergency Housing nationally, broken down by quarter, specifically for Motels/Hotels, and in total.

Quarter ending	Motel / Hotel		Total	
	Unique clients	Number of grants	Unique clients	Number of grants
September 2017	2,607	8,179	2,880	9,159
December 2017	1,847	5,548	2,078	6,172
March 2018	1,911	5,604	2,123	6,138
June 2018	2,561	8,338	2,879	9,245
September 2018	3,543	12,957	3,840	14,017

Notes:

- 'Unique clients' is a count of distinct individuals who received a grant during the quarter. The same unique client could receive an SNG across different quarters and accommodation types throughout the table.
- The 'number of grants' is a count of grants. A client can have more than one grant in a time period.
- 'Total' includes accommodation types other than Motel/Hotel such as holiday parks or campgrounds, and hostels.

Table 2: The number of Special Needs Grants for Emergency Housing for the Palmerston North site, broken down by quarter, specifically for Motels/Hotels, and in total.

Quarter ending	Motel / Hotel		Total	
	Unique clients	Number of grants	Unique clients	Number of grants
September 2017	144	437	154	453
December 2017	83	212	86	217
March 2018	78	144	80	148
June 2018	88	212	92	219
September 2018	172	415	180	431

Notes:

- 'Unique clients' is a count of distinct individuals who received a grant during the quarter. The same unique client could receive an SNG across different quarters and accommodation types throughout the table.
- The 'number of grants' is a count of grants. A client can have more than one grant in a time period.
- 'Total' includes accommodation types other than Motel/Hotel such as holiday parks or campgrounds, and hostels.
- Site is based on the Work and Income site where the recommending case manager for the application was based at the time of the grant.

- *How many complaints have been made by moteliers and their guests in Palmerston North and nationally?*

In the majority of cases, people staying in motels that we have helped with Emergency Housing SNGs are good neighbours to the people around them. However, occasionally there are issues that the Ministry steps in to help resolve.

In the last year in the Ministry's Central region (which includes Palmerston North) there have been three known occasions where the Regional Commissioner or their representatives have talked to moteliers about issues raised. One of these was in relation to a complaint (the incident that you first enquired about); the other two were in relation to other issues, one to thank a motelier for helping a vulnerable client, and one to sort out an issue in relation to payment.

The Ministry has looked into whether it can provide the other complaints information you have requested. Contact with moteliers providing emergency housing happens at a range of touch points and is almost always part of an on-going relationship. This contact includes conversations about unforeseen behaviours of tenants and managing the relationship forward, and these issues are recorded in notes on individual client files.

In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review the files of all clients who have received an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant to stay in a motel. This amounts to the review of thousands of files in order to identify the number of times staff have addressed more minor issues with motels in Palmerston North, and times staff have addressed complaints made by moteliers or their guests nationally. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act as the greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

The Ministry has considered whether it would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. 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 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 regarding emergency housing and motels, 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