



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

30 JAN 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 1 November 2019, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) accepted a partial transfer of your request to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, under the Official Information Act 1982. The Ministry is responding to the following questions:

- *The number of people receiving an Accommodation Supplement, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for the Accommodation Supplement, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for Temporary Additional Support, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of households receiving an Accommodation Supplement, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of households receiving Temporary Additional Support, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants provided, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of households receiving an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*

Accommodation Supplement

The Accommodation Supplement is a non-taxable supplementary payment which provides financial assistance towards accommodation costs. It is available for people who rent, board or own their own home. A person does not have to be receiving a benefit to be assessed to qualify for Accommodation Supplement. It is calculated using a formula that considers geographical location, family size, accommodation costs, income, and accommodation type.

On 1 April 2018, the maximum rates for Accommodation Supplement increased. Note that these changes are entered into Ministry systems prior to this date, and this is reflected in the data provided. Further information is available about this increase on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/benefit-rates/benefit-rates-april-2018.html.

Temporary Additional Support

The Temporary Additional Support (TAS) is also a non-taxable supplementary payment, which can be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks. It is paid as a last resort to help clients with their regular essential living costs that cannot be met from their chargeable income and other resources. This includes accommodation costs and can be provided in addition with the Accommodation Supplement if clients' circumstances fit the prerequisites. Note that when the Accommodation Supplement was increased in April 2018 there was a corresponding decrease to the average amount of TAS payable. This was because payments that were made for the purposes of supporting accommodation costs dropped in proportion to the increased rate of Accommodation Supplement. This is reflected in the data provided.

Further information about TAS is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/temporary-additional-support.

Emergency Housing

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place or residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances.

After these seven nights Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation and if another grant is required. The Ministry works hard to support people in emergency housing to secure a long-term housing solution, either through public housing or private rental accommodation. Other options including transitional housing can also be explored depending on availability and the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that motels are not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. They provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. More information about EH SNGs is available here: www.housing.msd.govt.nz/housing-options/emergency-housing.html.

Your questions are answered in turn:

- *The number of people receiving an Accommodation Supplement, by quarter from January 2016 to September 2019, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for the Accommodation Supplement, by quarter from January 2016 to September 2019, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support, by quarter from January 2016 to September 2019, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for Temporary Additional Support, by quarter from January 2016 to September 2019, by Territorial Local Authority*

Please find attached Table One and Table Two.

- Table One provides the number of Accommodation Supplement payments and the total weekly amount paid as at the end of each quarter during the period January 2016 to September 2019, broken down by Territorial Local Authority.

- Table Two provides the number of current Temporary Additional Support payments and the total weekly amount paid as at the end of each quarter during the period of January 2016 to September 2019, broken down by Territorial Local Authority.

In order to protect client privacy, some low values are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. Secondary suppression has also been applied. 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 and public interest in the information.

Regarding Table One and Table Two, the Ministry is unable to provide you with this data from March 2000 to 31 March 2016. To provide this information, the Ministry would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, as it would require substantial collation. 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 requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. The Ministry has concluded that, in either case, its ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

- *The number of households receiving an Accommodation Supplement, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of households receiving Temporary Additional Support, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*

The Ministry does not record these forms of financial assistance in a manner that allows it to extract data showing the number of households receiving Accommodation Supplement or Temporary Additional Support. To gather this information, the Ministry would have to look into notes held in individual case files. Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such your request for this information 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.

- *The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant provided, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The value of payments for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*
- *The number of households receiving an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant, by quarter since March 2000, by Territorial Local Authority*

EH SNGs were introduced on 1 July 2016. Prior to the 2016 December quarter, EH SNGs were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which includes 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 and any information regarding EH SNGs prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case

files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act.

The Ministry cannot provide you with the number and value of EH SNGs by Territorial Local Authority, as clients receiving EH SNGs are generally recorded in Ministry files as living in "no fixed abode". To find this information Ministry staff would have to look at notes held in individual files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, 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.

Due to the fact that clients receiving EH SNGs are recorded as living in "no fixed abode", Ministry staff would also have to look into individual files to find out the number of households receiving EH SNGs in each Territorial Local Authority. As such, 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.

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.

You may be interested to know that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development provides quarterly Housing Regional Factsheets, available from the following web-link: www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/follow-our-progress/. These factsheets provide figures for the approximate number of approved EH SNGs, households receiving EH SNGs and the total amount granted, broken down by Territorial Local Authority region.

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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 the Accommodation Supplement, Temporary Additional Support and Emergency Housing, 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 'K. Hocking', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Karen Hocking
**General Manager Housing
Service Delivery**