



31 JAN 2020



Dear 

On 21 November 2019, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *Can you please tell me when the last poorhouses, work houses, poor farms or other poor institutions closed in New Zealand*

The Ministry, as it currently stands, has never been responsible for providing housing such as this.

Dating back to the 1860s, the New Zealand government made a conscious effort not to replicate the 'workhouses' or 'poorhouses' of the United Kingdom. The government had minimal involvement with those in need and mainly placed responsibility for them on relatives or charitable institutions. For example, The Destitute Persons Act 1877 reflected this view by stating that immigrants would provide for themselves and their family members rather than rely on the State.

During the depression of the 1930s, the Department of Labour - now a part of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment - had a variety of work schemes, however, this would not fall under the jurisdiction of the current Ministry. During this period the government began to take a greater role in provision for those in need and New Zealand's comprehensive social security scheme was implemented on 1 April 1939.

Therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist.

For your interest, however, I have linked *Social Developments – an organisational history of the Ministry of Social Development and its predecessors, 1860-2011* which provides an overview of the Ministry and its predecessors' organisational changes from its establishment: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/history/social-developments-organisational-history.html

Additionally, *Social Assistance Chronology – a chronology of social assistance policy and programmes in New Zealand – 1844 to 2019* may be of interest as it logs changes beginning in 1844 and is updated regularly. Please find this here: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/history/social-assistance-chronology-programme-history.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. 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 New Zealand's conscious efforts not to replicate 'work houses' or 'poorhouses', 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



Alex McKenzie
Manager Employment and Housing Policy