



06 NOV 2020

On 25 September 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information regarding:

- *Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG) received by motels in Upper Hutt for the periods: 1 April 2017 to 30 June 2020.*
- *We understand that the Ministry are using Hawk's Inn Motel and Trentham Motel as accommodation providers in Upper Hutt. Are these the only providers?*
- *For each motel provider in Upper Hutt and each quarter in the period, please give:*
 - *Number of grants paid.*
 - *Total amount of grants paid.*
 - *Number of grants paid for families of 4 or more.*
 - *Total amount of grants paid for families of 4 or more.*

On 6 October 2020, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry), under the Act.

The 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 depending on the individual's 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 as an option 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 at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

There has been a growing demand nationally for emergency housing as the shortage of affordable housing and rising rents continues to impact low-income whānau,

particularly those who are beneficiaries. The year 2020 has seen a significant increase in demand for emergency housing, as the Ministry supported people through the COVID-19 pandemic period with accommodation where they could safely self-isolate. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, people also could not easily move out of emergency housing into long-term accommodation which contributed to longer durations of stay and higher costs.

Hawks Inn Motel and Trentham Motel are not the only Emergency Housing suppliers in Upper Hutt. Please see the Excel spreadsheet attached which consists of two tables detailing the number and amount of Emergency Housing Grants for Upper Hutt City for the quarters ending June 2017 to June 2020 by provider and household size:

- **Table One:** The number and amount of Emergency Housing Grants for Upper Hutt City for the quarters ending June 2017 to June 2020 by provider.
- **Table Two:** The number and amount of Emergency Housing Grants for Upper Hutt City for the quarters ending June 2017 to June 2020, for families of four or more people. Please note that household composition is based on the adults and children staying in the emergency housing and may not be reflective of their ordinary family/household situation.

The Ministry only started capturing information about household composition of EH SNG applicants from 01 April 2020, therefore the Ministry does not have records of EH SNGs granted to households of four or more prior to this date. This information is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such I refuse your request 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 will also note that some values within the attached tables are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. In order to protect client privacy, 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 the public interest in the information.

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
- 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 Emergency Housing suppliers in Upper Hutt, 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 horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing