



02 JUN 2021

Tēnā koe

On 13 May 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *All copies of contracts between MSD and Silverfern Property Services Limited,*
- *Information on why this company was selected as a contractor (for example through tender process, they approached MSD or any other channels),*
- *Please provide evidence that conflicts of interest was declared during process of contracting this company,*
- *Could you please provide data on how many clients this company has helped housing during the contracting period so that it was paid \$12 millions by MSD.*

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and more people are experiencing a severe and immediate need. This demand is generated by a shortage of affordable housing driving up house prices and rents. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs and many seek financial help through the Ministry.

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 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/%20map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

Due to the growing demand for emergency housing in Auckland, the Ministry has used a number of private rental properties to accommodate larger families. The Ministry is conscious that this has meant some property owners have withdrawn

properties from the rental market to offer them as short-term emergency accommodation, which attracts a higher weekly rate.

This has resulted in fewer of these properties being available for private rental.

In November 2019, the Ministry communicated these concerns to the landlords and property managers involved. The Ministry encouraged them to consider offering their properties to clients on a long-term basis, noting the support the Ministry could offer to facilitate this.

In May 2020, landlords and property managers were informed that the Ministry would no longer use private rental accommodation to meet the needs of those requiring emergency housing. This change came into effect in June 2020.

Due to the increased availability of motel accommodation because of reduced tourism demand, the Ministry can now manage the needs of those requiring emergency housing without using private rentals.

Silverfern Property Services Ltd is one of many suppliers in Auckland which offered emergency accommodation, including private rentals. Please note that the Ministry does not hold contracts with emergency housing suppliers, therefore your first three questions are refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as this information does not exist.

However, in regard to your question regarding how many distinct clients were granted EH SNGs for accommodation supplied by Silverfern Property Services Limited, please see **Table One** below, showing the total number of EH SNGs granted, distinct clients and total amount granted.

Table One: Total number of EH SNGs granted, distinct clients and total amount granted.

Provider Name	Number of Grants	Distinct clients	Total amount granted
SILVERFERN PROPERTY SERVICES LIMITED	6,524	661	\$14,715,563.41

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 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 regarding emergency housing with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

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Karen Hocking
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Housing