



21 JUN 2021

Tēnā koe

On 31 May 2021, you emailed the Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) the following information regarding emergency housing suppliers:

1. *What are the limitations on what guests can bring, and why and who sets that policy?*
2. *What is in the contract?*
3. *How many thefts and break ins have there been in the last two years of MSD tenants?*
4. *Shouldn't these units have two exits?*
5. *Will the motel owner refuse to house me there because I use crutches?*

On 1 June 2021, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) in full for response because the information to which your request relates to is operational.

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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/%20map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html).

For the sake of clarity, I will address each question in turn.

1. *What are the limitations on what guests can bring, and why and who sets that policy?*

Those staying in motels as emergency housing clients receive the same quality of service as any other guest, and in return are required to keep to the rules and expectations of the motelier. Any rules or limitations regarding what a guest can bring into their accommodation is set by the motelier.

2. *What is in the contract?*

The Ministry does not hold contracts with emergency housing suppliers rather the Ministry pays an EH SNG on behalf of a client for their accommodation services, these are the same services the motel would provide to any other customer. Therefore, this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as this information does not exist.

3. *How many thefts and break ins have there been in the last two years of MSD tenants?*

Any thefts or break ins affecting Ministry clients staying in emergency housing may be brought to the attention of the motelier, the Police, and in some cases the Work and Income Case Manager or Navigator. Any such reports if held, however, would be recorded on individual client files. In order to provide you with this information, if it is recorded, Ministry staff would have to manually review individual client files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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. The Ministry has concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

4. *Shouldn't these units have two exits?*

The Ministry expects moteliers who we use for emergency housing to meet all the relevant standards set by the regulatory authorities. Local councils, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Fire and Emergency New Zealand are responsible for regulatory standards affecting accommodation facilities. The motelier, as a business operator, is responsible for making sure the premises meets standards under the building code.

5. *Will the motel owner refuse to house me there because I use crutches?*

The Ministry works with clients requiring access to emergency housing to identify the most appropriate available accommodation to meet their individual needs, this includes accessibility. If you, or anyone you know, has concerns about accessibility if emergency housing is required, I encourage you/them to speak to Work and Income.

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](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'KH', written over a stylized, flowing signature.

Karen Hocking  
**General Manager, Housing**