



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

24 MAR 2021

On 2 February 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

1. *Total number of people MSD/WINZ has approved emergency accommodation for in Rotorua, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021,*
2. *Of the figures identified, how many did not live in Rotorua prior to having their accommodation paid by the MSD/WINZ, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021,*
3. *Total number of people whose emergency accommodation in Rotorua has been declined or stopped by MSD/WINZ due to bad behaviours, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021,*
4. *Of the figures identified, how many did not live in Rotorua prior to having their accommodation paid by MSD/WINZ, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021,*
5. *Total amount of funding given by MSD/WINZ to Visions of a Helping Hand Charitable Trust (VHHCT), for the period 2017/18 to 31 January 2021.*
6. *Purpose of funding (or a copy of each funding report provided to MSD/Winz by VHHCT - names of individuals should be redacted),*
7. *Names of emergency accommodation suppliers in Rotorua who've been paid \$2 million or more from the Ministry between 1 February 2018 and 1 February 2020,*
8. *How many meetings over the past 24 months has the agency had with its Treaty partner, Te Arawa, to discuss homelessness in Rotorua,*
9. *Has the Ministry been asked by any groups in Rotorua to reduce the number of people it pays emergency accommodation for in Rotorua who aren't local to Rotorua; and if so, what are the names of these groups, providers or individuals, and*
10. *Does the Ministry have any plans to reduce or stop approving emergency accommodation for people in Rotorua who are not local to Rotorua; and if not, why not?*

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

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Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time.

Every EH SNG applicant must make reasonable efforts to find longer-term secure accommodation. For most applicants, this includes applying for Transitional Housing and Public Housing. The Ministry does not own any accommodation places, and instead uses the EH SNG to pay for short-term accommodation provided by commercial and community providers.

The year 2020 saw 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.

The EH SNG was introduced on 1 July 2016 in order to fund temporary accommodation at places such as hostels and motels to meet people's immediate housing needs. Prior to the 2016 December quarter, Emergency Housing grants 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 Emergency Housing grant payments prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case files. As such, information relating to the value of Emergency Housing prior to quarter ending December 2016 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. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

For the sake of clarity, I will now respond to each of your questions in turn:

- 1. Total number of people MSD/WINZ has approved emergency accommodation for in Rotorua, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021.*

Please find attached as **Appendix A, Table One** showing the number of distinct clients granted EH SNGs from the Rotorua Service Centre during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2020, broken down by financial year end.

To protect confidentiality, the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.

- 2. Of the figures identified, how many did not live in Rotorua prior to having their accommodation paid by the MSD/WINZ, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021.*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with information regarding how many clients did not live in Rotorua prior to having accommodation in Rotorua paid for by the Ministry as 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 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.

3. *Total number of people whose emergency accommodation in Rotorua has been declined or stopped by MSD/WINZ due to bad behaviours, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021.*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with information on the number of clients whose EH SNG in Rotorua has been declined or stopped by the Ministry due to criminal activity or anti-social behaviour as it 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 this part of your request 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. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

4. *Of the figures identified, how many did not live in Rotorua prior to having their accommodation paid by MSD/WINZ, for the period 2015/2016 to 31 January 2021,*

As mentioned above, the Ministry does not centrally record how many clients have had their EH SNG declined or stopped due to bad behaviours, therefore the Ministry is unable to provide you with an answer to this question as the information is held in notes on individual case files. As such, I also refuse this part of your request 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. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

5. *Total amount of funding given by MSD/WINZ to Visions of a Helping Hand Charitable Trust (VHHCT), for the period 2017/18 to 31 January 2021.*
6. *Purpose of funding (or a copy of each funding report provided to MSD/Winz by VHHCT - names of individuals should be redacted).*

As discussed with you on 16 February 2021, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracts VHHTC and the Ministry manages the relationship on their behalf. Therefore, there has been no funding given by the Ministry to VHHCT for the period 2017/18 to 31 January 2021.

In order to be helpful, the Ministry can confirm that a total of \$8,734 was paid to VHHTC during the period 1 March 2018 to 31 March 2020 in EH SNGs. However,

registering as an EH SNG supplier does not create a contractual relationship between the Ministry and the supplier.

- 7. Names of emergency accommodation suppliers in Rotorua who've been paid \$2 million or more from the Ministry between 1 February 2018 and 1 February 2020.*

The Ministry can confirm that one Emergency Housing supplier in Rotorua has been granted over two million dollars by the Ministry from 01 February 2018 to 31 January 2020. This Emergency Housing supplier is Spa Lodge who has received a total of \$2,144,602 in EH SNGs.

- 8. How many meetings over the past 24 months has the agency had with its Treaty partner, Te Arawa, to discuss homelessness in Rotorua.*

As of 9 February 2021, there have been 35 meetings with Te Arawa to discuss homelessness.

In December 2019, a Regional Housing Advisor was employed to provide strategic advice and support across the Bay of Plenty region.

Since December 2019, the Ministry has worked collaboratively with Rotorua Lakes Council and Te Arawa in forming the He Papakāinga, He Hāpori Taurikura – A Strategy for Homes and Thriving Communities. There are a number of Te Arawa representatives that attend monthly meetings in regard to this work as well as a number of other initiatives in the region.

More information on this housing strategy, which also includes a summary of the engagements, can be found here: [www.letstalk.rotorualakescouncil.nz/a-strategy-for-homes-and-thriving-communities](http://www.letstalk.rotorualakescouncil.nz/a-strategy-for-homes-and-thriving-communities).

Due to the effects of COVID-19, work that was intended to occur with the different iwi across the region has been stilted. However, the Ministry has met with Rotomā No.1 Trust, Ngāti Uenukukopako, Te Arawa Lakes Trust, Ngāti Whakāue and Pukeroa Owhata Trust. We have also contracted with Te Taumata o Ngāti Whakāue and Te Arawa Whānau Ora to provide support and strategic advice for the homeless. Meetings are held at least weekly with the different agencies looking for varying support for the homeless.

- 9. Has the Ministry been asked by any groups in Rotorua to reduce the number of people it pays emergency accommodation for in Rotorua who aren't local to Rotorua; and if so, what are the names of these groups, providers or individuals?*

Ministry clients make their own choices about where they wish to reside. If a client chooses to relocate to a different region, the Ministry will try to assist in this move. However, the Ministry does not proactively relocate people for Emergency Housing.

The Ministry generally will try to place people in the same area where they already reside however, there may be certain situations where relocation is required such as

situations where family harm and violence is a factor or where there is an absence of emergency accommodation in a particular location.

*10. Does the Ministry have any plans to reduce or stop approving emergency accommodation for people in Rotorua who are not local to Rotorua; and if not, why not.*

The Ministry does not have any plans to reduce or stop approving Emergency Housing for people in Rotorua who are not local to Rotorua. As mentioned above, Ministry clients make their own choices about where they wish to reside.

If you would like to further discuss any issues regarding the homelessness in Rotorua please feel free to contact Taniya Ward, Regional Housing Advisor for the Bay of Plenty on (07) 921 8024 or by email at [Taniya.Ward005@msd.govt.nz](mailto:Taniya.Ward005@msd.govt.nz).

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

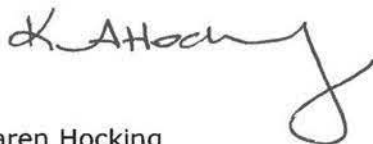
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Emergency Housing in Rotorua, 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.

Yours sincerely



Karen Hocking  
**General Manager  
Housing**



## Appendix A:

**Table One: The number of distinct clients granted an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) and amount granted from the Rotorua Service Centre during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2020, broken down by financial year end.**

Financial Year	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted	Number of grants
2016/17	177	\$494,681.53	562
2017/18	311	\$861,074.65	972
2018/19	770	\$8,027,375.91	6,591
2019/20	1,269	\$16,765,232.60	10,333
2020/21	1,234	\$10,860,369.40	6,114

### Notes:

- Clients may have grants to multiple providers in the same period.
- This is a count of clients, not grants.
- A client may have multiple grants in a period but will only be counted once.
- The 2016/17 financial year starts 01 October 2016 so will not be a full year.
- The 2020/21 financial year ends 31 December 2020 so will not be a full year.
- The Ministry's financial year starts 01 July and ends 30 June the following year.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than 2 counts.