



14 MAY 2021

Tēnā koe

On 15 April 2021 you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry)'s media team requesting the following information:

- *How many motels are currently being used in Rotorua for emergency accommodation purposes?*
- *Is it possible to get a number for how many rooms in Rotorua motels are being used for emergency accommodation?*

Following refinement from the Ministry's media team, on 16 April 2021 a request was submitted on your behalf, under the Official Information Act 1982, for the following information:

- *How many motels are currently being used in Rotorua for emergency accommodation purposes?*

There has been a recent announcement relating to Emergency Housing in Rotorua which covers:

- Government to directly contract motels for emergency accommodation
- Wrap around social support services for those in emergency accommodation to be provided
- Grouping of cohorts like families and tamariki in particular motels separate from other groups
- One-stop Housing Hub for access to services and support to be established

It is important to note that this response is provided based on practice as at 15 April 2021. Please find the link to the Beehive announcement below:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/rotorua-emergency-housing-update>.

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 contact 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.

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.

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 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.

Please note that as at 15 April 2021 in Rotorua, suppliers did not consistently offer accommodation to those paying by EH SNG. They may have done so as a one-off or choose to offer this only as capacity allows or for other reasons. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the supplier of Emergency Housing today will be housing clients in the future.

As discussed, we can provide you with the number of registered emergency housing suppliers that, between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2021, received at least one EH SNG payment on behalf of clients residing in the Rotorua District Territorial Local Authority (TLA). During that period, there were 67 motels that received EH SNGs for Rotorua-based clients. The timeframe 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021 was chosen to give a fair indication of the number motels that have been in use recently in Rotorua. However, please note that, since March, the number of motels catering to Rotorua-based clients may have changed.

Please also note that, as already indicated, our search of Rotorua suppliers was based on the recorded address of the client, not the supplier. Therefore, some motels included in the figure we have provided may not actually be in Rotorua.

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 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 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



 Karen Hocking,
**General Manager
Housing**