



18 MAY 2021

Dear

On 19 April 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How much money has MSD recovered through the 25 percent payment for staying in emergency motels?*
- *What proportion of those payments came from beneficiaries?*
- *What was the household breakdown for those payments (e.g. single parents, household with two parents, single)?*
- *What regions did those payments come from?*
- *How many of those people also accessed Emergency Food Grants?*

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. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier, and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances.

After these seven nights, Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation, and whether 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.

From 19 October 2020, the Ministry introduced the Emergency Housing Contribution (EHC). Following this change, the EH SNG paid for the first seven nights is still non-recoverable. For any further consecutive EH SNGs required, clients are required to pay 25 percent of their weekly income towards accommodation costs. The EHC is similar to what clients pay in transitional housing or public housing, this is to better transition clients when they leave Emergency Housing into longer-term housing. More information about EHC is available here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/news/2020/emergency-housing-changes.html.

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 here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/special-needs-grant.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.

For people with high and complex needs, it can sometimes be challenging to identify suitable long-term housing, which can lead to longer stays in emergency housing. Work and Income work closely with these people to see what can be done to ensure that once they have a home of their own, they have the skills to sustain it, and the support they need to keep it.

Please find **Table One** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which shows the number of Emergency Housing Contributions created, the total amount of Emergency Housing Contributions created and number of distinct clients for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, broken down by the receipt of a benefit.

Please find **Table Two** enclosed in the Excel Spreadsheet attached, which shows the number of Emergency Housing Contributions created, the total amount of Emergency Housing Contributions created and number of distinct clients for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, broken down by Ministry region.

In order to protect client confidentiality, the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. As such, the figures within the datasets provided to you have been randomly rounded up or down to zero or three.

The impact of random rounding is that the columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row total. However, the published figures will never differ by more than two counts and still allow you to see trends.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with the household breakdown of the EH SNG applications provided in Table One and Table Two, 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 your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with whether the recipient of the EH SNG applications provided in Table One and Table Two was also in receipt of an Emergency Food Grant, 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 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 requests 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.

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- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government

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 Contribution data, 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



 Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing