



2 August 2022

Tēnā koe

On 6 July 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *A breakdown of need (for social housing in Blenheim) over the past 5 years.*

So this would include:

- 1. Transfer register*
- 2. Priority A*
- 3. Priority B*
- 4. Household composition*
- 5. Ethnicity*
- 6. Number of bedrooms required*

Is future demand forecasted? If so that too please for Blenheim.

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, which is 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.

When New Zealanders are in need of Public Housing, their needs are recorded on either the Housing Register or the Transfer Register. The Housing Register shows people who are not currently in public housing but who have been assessed as eligible for public housing. The Transfer Register shows people already in public housing but who have applied to be rehoused. The combined register is referred to as the Public Housing Register (the Register). While the Ministry completes the housing assessments which inform the Register, responsibility for funding and supply sits with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Kainga Ora, respectively. More information about the Register is available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html.

Each housing application is given a priority rating based on the Ministry's assessment of housing need, and all applications are measured against the same criteria to determine that priority rating. Applicants who are assessed as at risk (Priority A) or as having a serious housing need (Priority B) are placed on the Register until a house becomes available. The Ministry's role is to assess people's needs for Public Housing and if they or a family member need an accessible home, this is captured as part of the assessment process.

The Ministry assesses the client's need for Public Housing through the Social Allocation System (SAS). The SAS assessment covers five criteria: adequacy, suitability, affordability, accessibility, and sustainability. Each category has a rating from one to four with four being the highest level of risk. The rating across these five criteria makes up a priority rating of up to 20. You can find more information regarding the SAS assessment criteria at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html.

Clients who approach the Ministry seeking Public Housing are offered other assistance appropriate to their situation. This can include support to secure private rentals including rent and bond, Accommodation Supplement or Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG), for emergency housing.

EH SNGs are 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 dependant on individual circumstances.

The Ministry provides ongoing support to help people secure a long-term housing solution, including looking into public housing and private rental accommodation as an option, depending on the individual's circumstances. EH SNGs are short-term in nature. The policy is aimed at encouraging clients to continue to search for their own accommodation options.

More information about emergency housing can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

Public and community housing providers are responsible for matching those on the Public Housing Register with available properties. They have discretion to select the household they believe will fit best with that property based on a number of factors. Because there is a shortage of appropriate public houses available to match people's individual needs, households with a high housing need will not always necessarily be placed before other households with lower priority ratings. Often the factors that cause a household to be in high housing need will be the very factors that work against it in the selection and placement process. For example, a large family that requires a modified house in an area where there are few public houses available would have more difficulty being

placed than a household with a lower priority rating in an area with greater supply of public houses.

Please see attached the following five tables the enclosed **Appendix**:

- **Table One:** The number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in the Blenheim Service Centre for each quarter end in the period 31 March 2017 to 30 June 2022, by quarter end and priority rating.
- **Table Two:** The number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in the Blenheim Service Centre for each quarter end in the period 31 March 2017 to 30 June 2022, by quarter end and Register type.
- **Table Three:** The number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in the Blenheim Service Centre for each quarter end in the period 31 March 2017 to 30 June 2022, by quarter end and Household type.
- **Table Four:** The number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in the Blenheim Service Centre for each quarter end in the period 31 March 2017 to 30 June 2022, by quarter end and number of required bedrooms.
- **Table Five:** The number of applicants on the Public Housing Register in the Blenheim Service Centre for each quarter end in the period 31 March 2017 to 30 June 2022, by quarter end and ethnic breakdown.

You requested any information held by the Ministry on future demand forecast of the Public Housing Register. Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

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'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 the Public Housing Register, 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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