



10 February 2022

Tēnā koe

On 17 January 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information regarding emergency housing in Northland:

- *If work has not started on my request thus far, am I able to tweak my request and add the fourth quarter of 2021 as well please and how that compares with the whole of 2020?*

On 17 January 2022, the Ministry contacted you to advise that this request would be treated as a new Official Information Act request.

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 on-going COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to increased demand for temporary housing where people have been unable to remain in or return to their usual residence.

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 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 and 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/housing/nowhere-to-stay/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 are also a distinct group of people that face a range of complex issues that are a barrier, such as mental health and addictions, criminal history, or family violence. There are still others that need to live in a specific area, due to the need to access specialist care or educational needs for them or their family.

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 attached **Appendix One** containing the following data tables:

- **Table One** - Number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants and Amount Granted for Hotel/Motels for clients in Northland between 1 October 2021 and 31 December 2021 broken down by Supplier and Quarter.
- **Table Two** - Number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants and Amount Granted excluding Hotel/Motels for clients in Northland between 1 October 2021 and 31 December 2021 broken down by Type of Accommodation and Quarter.

Please note that the higher trend in EH SNG amounts granted for 2021 in Northland, is attributed to the impacts of COVID-19 on the region.

For **Table One**, cells with 'S' are those where data has been suppressed to protect identification of individuals and is applied to values less than 6.

Please note that the registered supplier name is the name of the parent company of the accommodation supplier, and not necessarily the name of the accommodation itself. One registered supplier may provide

accommodation across multiple premises in different locations or trading names, receiving payment through the single supplier record.

Regarding the tables provided, please note that the Territorial Authority (TLA) is estimated based on the clients' address at the time of the grant. This TLA may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing supplier. Where the client address is not recorded, the location of the Ministry's service centre case managing the client has been used to approximate which TLA a client resides in. However, as the Ministry has switched to working from national queues, EH SNGs and other hardship grants could be granted by a case manager working anywhere in New Zealand. Therefore, in such cases, the TLA may not reflect the actual client address or location. Due to the transient nature of people receiving EH SNGs, the recorded address for a client may also be that of a trusted family member or friend who receives mail on their behalf.

You will notice that the lists of registered emergency housing suppliers provided include suppliers from outside of the Northland region. This is likely to be for payments made in arrears for a previous period of accommodation, or payments for a future period. A number of clients may have recently moved, but their address details have not yet been updated.

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 attachment 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 emergency housing in Northland 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
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