



10 October 2022

Tēnā koe

On 22 September 2022, your request was transferred in part to the Ministry of Social Development from the office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, as the information to which your request relates is operational. The part of your request which was transferred was as follows:

- *What is the year-on-year breakdown of how many residents have been moved, if any, to emergency accommodation in Rotorua from other parts of the country between 2017 to 2022? What are the reasons given?*
- *What is the year-on-year total cost breakdown of emergency accommodation in Rotorua, including costs for damages, costs for rents, costs for security etc. between 2017 to 2022.*

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 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](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html).

For clarity, I will respond to each part of your request in turn.

- *What is the year-on-year breakdown of how many residents have been moved, if any, to emergency accommodation in Rotorua from other parts of the country between 2017 to 2022? What are the reasons given?*

The Ministry has not moved clients from other areas of the country to Rotorua for emergency accommodation. As such, this section of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

- *What is the year-on-year total cost breakdown of emergency accommodation in Rotorua, including costs for damages, costs for rents, costs for security etc. between 2017 to 2022.*

Please find attached **Appendix One** containing **Table One**, showing the number and amount of EH SNGs granted to clients with registered addresses in the Rotorua Territorial Local Authority (TLA) from 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2022 broken down by quarter.

Regarding **Table One**, please note that the 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. Following COVID-19 the Ministry implemented a phone-based appointment system, allowing EH SNGs and other hardship grants to be administered by case managers working anywhere in New Zealand. In such cases, the TLA may not necessarily reflect the client's actual 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.

Where the Ministry is paying EH SNGs for accommodation, they can also facilitate the cost of a security deposit. However, the majority of clients do not need this payment as they do not cause any damage. The Ministry is aware that damage is sometimes caused in emergency housing, with the vast majority from minor occurrences such as accidental breakages. When the Ministry is provided with evidence of any damages, the Ministry will, with agreement from the client, make payment from the security deposit on behalf of the client. Agreement from the client is not required if the client leaves the emergency housing without checking out. Clients are required to pay this back to the Ministry at a rate that doesn't cause them undue hardship.

The Ministry provides information on its website to property owners, landlords and suppliers of emergency housing, at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/index.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/index.html).

The Ministry provides a security deposit to housing suppliers and providers that is designed to protect them when there are losses or damages caused by the Ministry's clients (or anyone else staying with them). Security deposits need to be agreed to by the clients and the supplier/provider of the accommodation, and approved by the Ministry, before a client can stay with a provider. More information on how security deposits work is available here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/security-deposit.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/security-deposit.html).

The security deposit can cover the actual and reasonable costs of:

- breakages or damages caused by the client or anyone staying with them, such as, any breakages or damage to the property whether intentional or accidental
- losses relating to failure of the client to meet their obligations to the supplier/provider under their agreement for stay. This can include replacing items that have been removed from the room, excessive cleaning charges, the room being unavailable due to (excessive) cleaning or belongings left behind and providing replacement keys.

The security deposit does not cover:

- the cost of refurbishing units when tenants move out or the property ceases provision of emergency accommodation
- telephone, internet, or pay-television charges
- utilities
- meal charges
- storage of excessive goods
- laundry services
- car-parking
- general wear and tear.

The Ministry will not pay the security deposit if the costs for loss or damage:

- is more than the amount approved for the security deposit
- if the loss/damage has been discussed with the client and they did not agree that the loss or damage was their responsibility
- is for costs other than loss or damages – for example, other services, such as telephone charges
- if the costs are for general wear and tear, or
- if the security deposit has already been fully used for example, a previous claim by an individual.

If the Ministry will not pay for damages or loss, then the accommodation supplier/provider needs to seek this cost from the client(s) themselves.

Regarding security deposit claims, please find attached **Appendix One** containing **Table Two** showing the number and amount of Security Deposit Claims granted in the Rotorua Work and Income Service Centre during the period 1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022 broken down by quarter.

Please note, the Ministry is unable to provide information on security deposit claims prior to December 2021 as these claims are not stored centrally but on individual files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse information prior to December 2021 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.

I can advise you that the Ministry does not contract or fund security guards at Emergency Housing accommodation. Regional staff manage any incidents or safety issues as they arise, with the relevant authorities. Your request for information relating to the costs of security is also refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hocking  
**Group General Manager**  
**Housing**

## Appendix One

**Table One: The number and amount of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs) granted to clients with registered addresses in the Rotorua Territorial Local Authority from 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2022 broken down by quarter.**

Quarter End	Number of EH SNGs	Total Amount of EH SNG Granted
March 2017	75	\$83,574
June 2017	282	\$256,780
September 2017	411	\$382,102
December 2017	228	\$207,049
March 2018	66	\$49,668
June 2018	261	\$211,603
September 2018	987	\$855,507
December 2018	1,374	\$1,604,392
March 2019	1,851	\$2,278,721
June 2019	2,409	\$3,362,586
September 2019	3,381	\$4,479,251
December 2019	3,009	\$4,482,452
March 2020	2,634	\$3,850,875
June 2020	2,088	\$5,058,177
September 2020	3,114	\$4,674,561
December 2020	3,315	\$5,650,076
March 2021	2,568	\$5,692,226
June 2021	2,682	\$6,038,025
September 2021	2,268	\$4,524,454
December 2021	2,523	\$5,654,248
March 2022	2,190	\$5,467,505
June 2022	2,019	\$5,187,966

### Notes:

- Territorial Local Authority is estimated based on the clients address at the time of the grant. It may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.
- This is a count of grants for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants not a count of clients, a client may have multiple grants in a period.
- The amount granted may not be the amount spent.

**Table Two: The number and amount of Security Deposit Claims granted in the Rotorua Work and Income Service Centre during the period 1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022 broken down by quarter.**

<b>Quarter End</b>	<b>Number of Security Deposit Claim Grants</b>	<b>Amount of Security Deposit Claims Granted</b>
December 2021	0	\$0
March 2022	30	\$13,835
June 2022	42	\$26,636

Notes:

- Security Deposit Claims began in December 2021.
- This is a count of grants of Security Deposit Claims not a count of clients, a client may have multiple grants in a period.
- The amount granted may not be the amount spent.
- The location of the Supplier may be outside recommending staff members site location.
- Service centre is based on the recommending staff member.