



28 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 3 August 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *On August 1st 2022, TVNZ ran a story which stated that 480 people were living in cars. The National Party have subsequently highlighted that figure which they say came from MSD. Could you please tell me:*
  1. *Is the figure of 480 people living in cars in June of 2022 the one you supplied TVNZ?*
  2. *If so, how was that figure arrived at?*
  3. *Was it the same method of data collection in December of 2017 to give the 108 figure quoted by both TVNZ and the National Party*
  4. *How many of those 480 people are children?*
  5. *Please supply any data you hold on numbers of children who are known to be homeless but not living in emergency accommodation.*

On 30 August 2022, in accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Act, your request was extended to 28 September 2022. The reason for the extension was that consultations necessary to make a decision on the request were such that a proper response to the request could not reasonably be made within the original time limit.

The Ministry's previous response to you of 18 March 2022 provided a comprehensive overview of the Ministry's Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG), which 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.

For the sake of clarity, this response addresses your requests in turn.

1. *Is the figure of 480 people living in cars in June of 2022 the one you supplied TVNZ?*
2. *If so, how was that figure arrived at?*

The Ministry did not provide the number of people living in cars directly to TVNZ. The story is one of a series of stories that have misrepresented the situation in terms of the data the Ministry holds on people living in cars. The Ministry's media team is happy to talk to you further about this – please contact Ruth Laugesen on [media@msd.govt.nz](mailto:media@msd.govt.nz)

This figure comes from the Minister of Housing's response to a Written Parliamentary Question (WPQ) 24747 from Chris Bishop MP (National), which is available on Parliament's website here: [www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\\_24747\\_2022/24747-2022-chris-bishop-to-the-minister-of-housing](http://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ_24747_2022/24747-2022-chris-bishop-to-the-minister-of-housing)

The Ministry was the source for the Minister's information as it manages the Public Housing Register. Please see the attachment to the WPQ, which contains a table showing the numbers of applicants on the Public Housing Register who were living in a car at the time they applied. The figures provide numbers for the quarters ending December 2017, June 2022, and the months ending January, February, and March 2022.

The number of 480 was the number of applicants on the Public Housing Register who told the Ministry they were living in a car when they first applied for public housing, for the month ending 31 June 2022. They may have applied in the previous month, or they may have applied many years earlier.

It's important to note the 480 number is not a measure of who is currently living in a car. The Minister's advice in the WPQ is that this information is a snapshot in time of when someone first applies for the register and is not indicative of their situation subsequently. The Minister also advised that if a person does present to the Ministry with immediate high housing needs, the Ministry will:

- Ensure they have a safe place to stay
- Provide transitional housing options, or if none are available provide an Emergency Housing Special needs Grant.

*3. Was it the same method of data collection in December of 2017 to give the 108 figure quoted by both TVNZ and the National Party?*

This information is collected at the point of application for the Public Housing Register. In the table attached to the response to WPQ 24747, you will see it includes the number of applicants on the Public Housing Register who were living in a car at the time they applied for the quarter ending 31 December 2017, which was 108.

4. *How many of those 480 people are children?*

Please see the information provided in **Table One** below and in the notes provided to support the information in the table. For clarity, the Ministry cannot say that there were any children living in cars. Instead, the 480 households included children in their applications, but the children were not necessarily living with them in their car at the time of application.

**Table One: The number of children included in applications on the Public Housing Register where the primary applicant is recorded as living in a car as at 30 June 2022**

Type of Accommodation	30 June 2022		
	Households	Households with Children	Children
Car	480	114	228

**Notes for Table One**

- The way we hold data is not able to capture the number of adults or children who are living in cars at any one time. The information we have measures how many people come to us for help, and the help we provide.
- The data is about how many children were included in applications for public housing by people who said they were living in cars at the time they applied to go on the housing register. For clarity, the Ministry cannot say that there were any children living in cars. Instead, the 480 households included children in their applications, but the children were not necessarily living with them in their car at the time of application.
- Households is primary applicants
- This data includes Priority A and B applications
- When an applicant completes a Register application staff record the type of accommodation the client is currently stating in. Information is updated when the Ministry is aware of a change in circumstances.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data
- These tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
- The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

5. *Please supply any data you hold on numbers of children who are known to be homeless but not living in emergency accommodation.*

The Ministry does not hold any information or data on the numbers of children who are known to be homeless but not living in emergency accommodation. However, in the spirit of being helpful, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may be able to assist with further information. This is a link to HUD's Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan: [www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/aotearoa-new-zealand-homelessness-action-plan-2020-2023/](http://www.hud.govt.nz/our-work/aotearoa-new-zealand-homelessness-action-plan-2020-2023/)

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 about the number of people living in cars and how many of them are children, 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



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