



14 February 2023

Tēnā koe

On 18 January 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The information I require is related to the South Taranaki area. Can you please provide to me in table format - the number of emergency housing providers available in the area and the number of tenants who are currently utilising this method of housing in that area and for what term or tenure for the last 20 years.*

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and many 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 or 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.

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.

You have requested a list of accommodation suppliers available in the South Taranaki area. The Ministry is unable to provide a list of EH suppliers in a certain area as businesses may provide a registered address that is different to the physical address of their service (for example, a PO Box). The Ministry can instead provide a list of EH suppliers that have received an EH SNG on behalf of a client with a registered address in the South Taranaki area.

Please refer to **Table One** in the attached **Appendix**, which shows the list of suppliers that have received at least one EH SNG paid in the South Taranaki Territorial Local Authority (TLA) during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2022 by quarter.

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. 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 some 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 have also requested the term and tenure of tenants receiving an EH SNG from the Ministry in the South Taranaki TLA. The Ministry has interpreted this aspect of your request to refer to the number of clients who have been granted an EH SNG in the South Taranaki TLA and the duration of their stay.

Please refer to **Table Two** in the **attached Appendix**, which shows the number of EH SNGs paid in the South Taranaki TLA during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2022, broken down by quarter, number of grants, amount granted, number of distinct clients, and the mean and median consecutive duration.

You will note that the data provided in the Ministry's response to you does not cover the full 20-year period that you have requested. EH SNGs were introduced on 1 July 2016 in order to fund temporary accommodation at commercial accommodation suppliers to meet people's immediate housing needs.

Prior to the 2016 December quarter, emergency housing grants were coded in the Ministry's IT system as 'other emergency grants', which includes hardship grants for various other emergency reasons. The Ministry cannot disaggregate emergency housing hardship payments from other types of assistance granted under the 'other emergency grants' category and any information regarding emergency housing grant payments prior to the December 2016 quarter is recorded in notes on individual case 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 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 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.

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 Emergency Housing in the South Taranaki Territorial Local Authority, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', written in a cursive style.

Karen Hocking
**Group General Manager
Housing**