



3 March 2023

Tēnā koe

On 2 February 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

Are you able to please help me with the following information:

- 1. The current total number of emergency housing providers in New Zealand, and a list of these providers.*
- 2. The current total number of emergency housing providers in Auckland, and a list of these providers.*
- 3. The number of people in emergency housing in New Zealand each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
- 4. The number of people in emergency housing in Auckland each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
- 5. The number of people on the wait list for emergency housing in New Zealand each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
- 6. The number of people on the wait list for emergency housing in Auckland each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
- 7. The number of people identified as needing emergency housing because of the Auckland floods.*
- 8. Any information regarding the government's work with the accommodation sector in relation to the Auckland floods, including:*
 - o A list of the accommodation providers the government has identified to house people affected by the floods, highlighting which of these are new providers.*
 - o Any more relevant information regarding emergency housing after the Auckland floods.*

On 10 February 2023, the Ministry contacted you in regard to part 5-6 of your question requesting the number of people on the wait list for emergency housing. We had advised you that the Ministry did not have a wait list for emergency housing as EH SNGs were intended to meet an immediate and essential need. As these aspects of your request were likely to be refused

under section 18(e) of the Act on the basis the document does not exist, you agreed to refine your request to the wait list for social housing instead.

On 20 February 2023, the Ministry advised you that parts of your request have been transferred to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Auckland Council as the information you are requesting is not held by the Ministry but is believed to be held by MBIE and the Auckland Council. You can expect a response from MBIE and Auckland Council for part 8 of your request in due course. Parts 1-7 of your request will be addressed in this response.

In the interests of clarity, I will answer each of your questions in turn. Some sections of the request are grouped together.

- 1. The current total number of emergency housing providers in New Zealand, and a list of these providers.*
- 2. The current total number of emergency housing providers in Auckland, and a list of these providers.*

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.

It is important to note that the Ministry does not contract motels to provide emergency housing in New Zealand. Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants are intended as a one-off grant. In order to receive an Emergency Housing Special Needs payment, an accommodation supplier must register with the Ministry as a supplier. The Ministry can only pay into the bank accounts of businesses who are registered as suppliers, and this registration does not create a contractual relationship between the Ministry and the accommodation supplier.

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 emergency housing providers in Auckland and in New Zealand. 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 Auckland area.

Please refer to **Table One** in the attached **Appendix**, which shows a list of suppliers receiving at least one EH SNG paid on behalf of a client with a registered address in the Auckland TLA. The table also shows a list of suppliers in New Zealand in the period 1 January 2020 to 31 January 2023.

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 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.

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.

3. *The number of people in emergency housing in New Zealand each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
4. *The number of people in emergency housing in Auckland each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*

You have requested the number of people in emergency housing each month from January 2020 to February 2023 in Auckland and in New Zealand. Unfortunately, the Ministry is unable to provide you with the number of people in emergency housing in the period January-March 2020 as the composition of emergency housing only started being recorded at the end of April 2020.

Information prior to this would be held in individual case files of the clients and in order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of individual client files. As such, your request for the number of people in emergency housing in the period January- March 2020 is refused under section 18(f) of the Act as it would require substantial manual collation. 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.

Please refer to **Table Two** in the attached **Appendix**, which shows a list of the number of households in emergency housing at the end of each month in the period April 2020 to January 2023 in Auckland and in New Zealand.

5. *The number of people on the wait list for emergency housing in New Zealand each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*
6. *The number of people on the wait list for emergency housing in Auckland each month from January 2020 to February 2023.*

Please refer to **Table Three** in the attached **Appendix**, which shows the number of applications on the Public Housing Register (which is made up of the Housing Register and the Transfer Register) at the end of each month in the period January 2020 to January 2023 in Auckland and in New Zealand.

7. *The number of people identified as needing emergency housing because of the Auckland floods.*

The Ministry is not the agency responsible for housing people who have been displaced by floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. Local Civil Defence teams are responsible for immediate accommodation needs after an emergency.

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, 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
Group General Manager
Housing