



4 May 2023

Tēnā koe

On 22 March 2023, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. How many people were declined Emergency Accommodation because there was no emergency accommodation available, for the last 3 months in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti ?*
- 2. How many people were declined Emergency Accommodation because there was no emergency accommodation available, for the last 12 months in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti?*
- 3. How many people are waiting for a vacancy in Emergency Accommodation so they will have somewhere to stay in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti ?*
- 4. How long have people, that have been declined Emergency Accommodation been waiting for a vacancy in Emergency Accommodation?*
- 5. How many people are declined Emergency Accommodation daily in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti?*
- 6. How many of the people declined Emergency Accommodation have children?*
- 7. If this information isn't collected, how are these people followed up to ensure they find emergency accommodation while they are in need?*

For 3 months ended December 2022 and 12 months ended December 2022.

On 21 April 2023 the Ministry informed you that a decision had been made to grant your request in part, but more time was required to prepare the information for release.

The Ministry has interpreted 'emergency accommodation' as emergency housing. Please contact the Ministry if this was not the intent of your request.

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.

I will now respond to your questions in turn.

- 1. How many people were declined Emergency Accommodation because there was no emergency accommodation available, for the last 3 months in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti ?*
- 2. How many people were declined Emergency Accommodation because there was no emergency accommodation available, for the last 12 months in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti?*

Certain criteria including meeting income, asset and residency tests must be met by the client before they can be granted an EH SNG. More information on these qualifications can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/emergency-housing/qualifications.html.

Other examples of why an EH SNG application may be declined can be found at the links below:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/emergency-housing/when-we-cannot-pay-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/emergency-housing/when-we-can-decline-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html

When supporting clients to access emergency housing, the Ministry will work with clients to identify the emergency housing options best suited to their individual circumstances at the time of their application, which includes ensuring there is vacancy for the client. No accommodation available is not a reason for an EH SNG decline in the Ministry's client management system.

As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the information you requested does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

- 3. How many people are waiting for a vacancy in Emergency Accommodation so they will have somewhere to stay in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti ?*
- 4. How long have people, that have been declined Emergency Accommodation been waiting for a vacancy in Emergency Accommodation?*

As mentioned above, Ministry staff work with clients who need urgent access to emergency housing to identify options best suited to their individual circumstances at the time of their application. This includes ensuring they are applying for an EH SNG with a supplier where there is vacancy immediately available for the client. Clients also often have their own preferences for where they wish to stay, which we take into consideration. Clients will generally move into emergency housing the same day their EH SNG application is approved.

As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the information you requested does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

5. How many people are declined Emergency Accommodation daily in Gisborne/Tairāwhiti?

Table One in the **Appendix** outlines the number of clients and total declines for EH SNGs in the Gisborne District Territorial Local Authority during the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022, broken down by quarter.

Please note the Ministry has provided the number of people declined by quarter, not the number of people declined daily, for year ending 2022.

6. How many of the people declined Emergency Accommodation have children?

16 of the clients who were declined an EH SNG in year ending 31 December 2022 currently have children included on their client file. Please note the following with this information:

- The Ministry cannot confirm whether these children were included in the EH SNG application. It is possible that a child attached to a client's file may have alternative living arrangements to the client and may not be in need of emergency housing.
- As this information is current, this figure includes children who were born after the client's declined EH SNG application.
- The Ministry cannot verify if children are included in more than one client's file.
- This number only includes people who have also received a benefit through Work and Income which required them to declare their child/children, as this information is stored in the client's benefit file.

7. If this information isn't collected, how are these people followed up to ensure they find emergency accommodation while they are in need?

Every client has different needs, and the Ministry will work with them to ensure they are receiving their full and correct entitlements if we are aware that they are in hardship.

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 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 Gisborne/Tairāwhiti, 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 blue ink, appearing to be 'KH', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Karen Hocking
**Group General Manager
Housing**

Appendix

Table One: The number of clients declined and total declined applications for EH SNGs in the Gisborne District Territorial Local Authority during the period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022, broken down by quarter.

Quarter End	Number of clients declined	Number of declined applications
March 2022	S	S
June 2022	6	6
September 2022	15	18
December 2022	12	12

Table Notes:

- Territorial Local Authority is estimated based on the clients address at the time of the decline. It may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.
- The number of declines is not a count of clients, clients may have multiple declines in a period.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
- These data 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.
- In certain circumstances low numbers may potentially lead to individuals being identified.
- Due to privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed or aggregated.
- Secondary suppression rules have also been applied when required.
- Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'.