



16 November 2023

Tēnā koe

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

I am writing an article on the state of emergency housing in the country.

Could you provide a breakdown of the number of emergency housing providers across the country?

How many providers are there in each region?

How do these numbers compare to last year?

What about five years ago?

How many providers were contacted in 2023?

How does this number compare to last year?

What about five years ago?

How many providers refused a query for them to be used as emergency housing in 2023?

How does this number compare to last year?

What about five years ago?

How much money was spent on emergency housing providers?

How does this number compare to last year?

What about five years ago?

How much was spent on each provider?

*How many adults were living in emergency housing as of September?
How many children?*

I will first provide you with an explanation of emergency housing assistance before responding to 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.

The Ministry grants financial assistance to clients and pays that to suppliers on their behalf. There is no direct relationship (or contract) between the Ministry and supplier. EHSNGs are intended as a one-off grant. They are not able to be paid in advance of the need, or beyond what an individual is entitled to at the time of application. Given the high level of need many clients experience, subsequent grants are applied for in succession, and these are paid for up to 21 days at a time.

Your request

In terms of how many suppliers refused a query for them to be used as emergency housing, this information is held 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.

Regarding the remaining part of your request, please see the attached **Appendix** which provides:

- **Table One:** the number of emergency housing suppliers in each region, by year and region.
- **Table Two:** the amount granted to each emergency housing suppliers, by year.
- **Table Three:** the number of adults and children residing in emergency housing as at 30 September 2023.

You will note that the registered supplier name may be the name of the parent company of the accommodation supplier and may not necessarily be 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. You will also note that some suppliers may be listed due to a coding error when a client receives multiple assistance payments at one point in time, for example for petrol or groceries.

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 the attachment 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 EH SNG suppliers, 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 read 'K. Hocking', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hocking
Group General Manager
Housing