



3 October 2024

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

Thank you for your email of 5 September 2024, requesting a breakdown of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EHSNG) applications from 1 January 2019 to 31 August 2024, by decline, age, region, children, and month.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision set out below.

Please find the data requested in the attached **Appendix**.

In order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs and public interest in the information.

I am unable to provide you with this data on EHSNG declines broken down by household composition as it is held 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.

Your request for data on household composition for EHSNG applicants prior to April 2020 is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

### **Reporting on EHSNG declines**

The Ministry has tightened the gateway into emergency housing. In April 2024, the Priority One fast track was implemented to support whānau with children to move out of emergency housing and into social housing.

Further legislative changes that came into effect on 26 August 2024 create a more rules-based system and ensure emergency housing is provided to those in genuine, urgent need and for those who are meeting their responsibilities.

Under the operational changes introduced in April 2024, an updated emergency housing resolution framework gave Ministry staff updated guidance on the emergency housing end-to-end processes, including using mandatory Structured Client Event Notes to record processes when screening and assessing if a client qualifies for emergency housing.

It is anticipated that those changes will lead to more consistent frontline practice with regard to emergency housing declines, and consequently more accurate reporting.

### **Risk mitigations**

The Government has sought to mitigate risks associated with tightening the gateway for emergency housing in a number of ways, including continued investment in emergency housing support services and additional financial products to support people into sustainable homes, policy settings to enable housing growth and funding community housing providers to build 1,500 new homes. In addition, there is ongoing work underway to assist people transitioning from state care.

#### *Emergency Housing Support Services*

Through Budget 2024, the Ministry received funding to extend emergency housing support services for two further years. These services include integrated services case managers, housing brokers, contracted navigator services, flexible funding and the ready to rent programme to help people at risk of homelessness, and those in emergency housing to access suitable and sustainable accommodation.

The Ministry is putting the needs of vulnerable whanau in emergency housing first by establishing the Priority One fast-track on the Social Housing Register, where families with children in emergency housing for longer than 12-weeks are prioritised into available social housing tenancies. Since this was established in April this year, we have seen about 540 whanau exit emergency housing into secure social housing tenancies.

#### *Housing Support Products (HSPs)*

The Ministry has expanded its suite of HSPs to assist people into suitable homes. These products can now also be used where people are flatting or boarding privately. In particular, the Accommodation Security Cover Grant provides assistance to obtain or retain accommodation by providing assurance to accommodation suppliers that any outstanding accommodation costs will be covered, if owed at the end of the accommodation agreement.

Ministry staff can use these supports to work with at-risk whanau to prevent homelessness where possible and to help them remain safely housed.

Where a client is declined emergency housing assistance, it is important to note that there may still be other services, packages and supports the client can access

through the Ministry. The Ministry will continue to provide the client with options and advice on alternative housing options and financial and other support.

We recognise that many of the people accessing emergency housing experience multiple complexities and require tailored support to help them address the issues underlying their homelessness and to find a home.

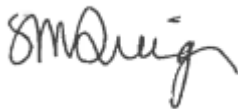
As people in emergency housing can be at risk of having complex needs, we have also introduced a "limited circumstance" pathway for those most vulnerable. People who have multiple risk factors, are experiencing a crisis beyond their control and are at risk of current or near-term harm, will be able to temporarily continue to access emergency housing until risk to near term harm is resolved.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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

pp. 

Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**