



Dear 

On 27 March 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information in regards to social and accessible housing in Palmerston North:

1. *How many on the waiting list have a physical disability or an intellectual or sensory disability?*
2. *What questions are asked to determine the level of modifications needed?*
3. *How many disabled people are on the waiting list currently?*
4. *How many disabled people are in emergency housing?*
5. *How many disabled people are in motels?*

The Ministry took over responsibility for managing Social Housing applications and the Social Housing Register in April 2014. The Social Housing Register is dynamic rather than static, and changes as people's circumstances and situations change. Placing people and families in houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the house has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services such as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if appropriate. An applicant's disability is taken into account when calculating their priority rating on the Social Housing Register. Those assessed as having the greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Register may change also. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

The Social Housing Register consists of the Housing Register and the Transfer Register. The Housing Register records those who are not currently in Social Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Social Housing. The Transfer Register represents those already in Public Housing who are eligible to be rehoused, generally due to a change in circumstances prompting a move to somewhere more appropriate to their needs.

More information regarding eligibility for social housing is available on the Ministry's website at: www.housing.msd.govt.nz/housing-options/social-housing/who-can-get-social-housing.html.

For the sake of clarity, I will address each of your questions in turn.

1. *How many on the waiting list [in Palmerston North] have a physical disability or an intellectual or sensory disability?*

The Ministry does not specifically record which clients have physical, intellectual or social disabilities. The data used to answer your questions is collated based on the numbers of people in receipt of the Supported Living Payment (SLP) or Jobseeker Support- Health Condition, Injury and Disability (JS-HCD). These types of assistance do not use a definition of "disability", but rather use an eligibility criteria including a recommendation from a health practitioner to assess client's ability to take up full or part-time work. It is important to note not all households will require modifications to their public house as people in receipt of these types of benefit may also have health conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders or be ill.

If you are interested in finding out more about eligibility criteria, this information is available at:

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/lost-job/health-condition.html#null>.

The Ministry reports information about Social Housing each quarter. In the quarter ending 31 March 2019, for the Palmerston North region, 354 people were on the Housing Register and 81 people were on the Transfer Register. Out of those on the Housing Register, 108 also received an SLP or JS-HCD, and of those on the Transfer Register, 33 people also received an SLP or JS-HCD.

2. *What questions are asked to determine the level of modifications needed?*

In order for a client to be placed on the Social Housing Register they must complete a Social Housing Assessment. As part of this assessment applicants are asked what modifications each household member requires. Generally, when an applicant indicates modifications are needed they will be asked to provide verification (e.g. a letter from an occupational therapist or health specialist) if they do not already have sufficient evidence on file. If a client is eligible for funding from an external agency for modifications (e.g. ACC) this is also recorded. At the end of the assessment the applicant completes a needs assessment summary to confirm what their housing requirements are. This information is along with their other housing requirements are shared with relevant housing providers.

3. *How many disabled people are on the waiting list currently?*

I refer you to my response in question one above.

4. *How many disabled people are in emergency housing?*

Emergency housing assistance payments are granted on a weekly basis as Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNGs). In the quarter ending 31 March 2019, 130 EH SNG's were granted to 42 clients in receipt SLP or JS-HCD in Palmerston North.

5. *How many disabled people are in motels?*

While the Ministry is unable to provide you with the number of people in receipt of SLP or JS-HCD staying in motels, in the quarter ending 31 March 2019, 95% of the total EH SNGs in Palmerston North were for stays in a motel.

This information you have asked for is held on individual case files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of case files. 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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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 about social and accessible housing in Palmerston North, 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.

Yours sincerely



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