



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

10 NOV 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

On 21 October 2019, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information about emergency and transitional housing.

On 25 October 2019, your request was transferred in part to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development for a response. This letter will address the following questions in regards to emergency housing:

1. *How many rooms in each town (all towns and cities in NZ) are occupied for emergency housing, preferably on a monthly basis (as this will help us understand the effects on tourism capacity, especially in peak times), broken down by type of accommodation (camp ground/marae/hostel/motel/hotel/shelter), and the average room cost.*
2. *What is the policy around how much is paid for a room? Is there a formula around a percentage above normal rack rate? Is there any seasonal adjustment in the rates you pay for the various times of year? (Typically, a motel will have a high, low, and shoulder rack rate)*
3. *Please explain what guarantees accommodation providers have regarding damage. Is there a bond and if so how is this calculated, managed and paid out?*

The Ministry recognises that emergency housing is not a long-term solution, particularly for vulnerable people with complex needs. It provides a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. It is important that those who would otherwise be homeless have somewhere warm and dry to stay.

The Ministry provides ongoing support to help people secure a long-term housing solution, including looking into public housing and private rental accommodation as an option depending on the individual's circumstances.

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place or residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. Assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended dependant on individual circumstances.

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More information about EH-SNGs is available here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing.html

Affordable accommodation in New Zealand is in limited supply, including short term accommodation. More people are seeking help from the Ministry for emergency housing. To address this shortage, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is overseeing the development of an extra 6,400 public housing places, which will be delivered by June 2022. In the 2018/2019 financial year, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has delivered on 2,178 public houses and there's a future pipeline of more than 2,700. This year's Budget provided \$283 million to fund and maintain over 2,800 Transitional Housing places throughout New Zealand, along with another \$197 million to expand and strengthen Housing First to high demand areas.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with information regarding the number of rooms occupied for emergency housing as the Ministry does not record this information. For example, the Ministry may approve one EH SNG for a family of six, who stay in two adjoining motel rooms. Ministry systems will record this as one grant. Therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

You may be interested to read the Ministry's benefit fact sheets, which provide an overview of trends in benefit receipt and hardship assistance, including Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants. The fact sheets are published on the Ministry's website quarterly, and are available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/hardship-assistance.html.

You may also be interested to read the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's Quarterly Housing Report, available here: www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/follow-our-progress/. These reports show the number of EH SNGs approved broken down by region.

Ministry staff are provided with guidance around appropriate costs for Emergency Housing. A client will receive a quote from a provider, and the Ministry will pay the provider the quoted rates. This guidance can be viewed here:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-per-night-rates-for-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing.html

Emergency Housing providers may require a security deposit to provide security against loss or damage to their property. Information about security deposits can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/security-deposit-required-by-the-emergency-housing-provider.html

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 the number of rooms used for Emergency Housing, 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



Elisabeth Brunt
General Manager Ministerial and Executive Services