



23 December 2021

Tēnā koe

On 4 November 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. What is the longest current wait time for social housing placement?*
- 2. What is the longest current wait time for any review of decision yet to be heard regarding social housing?*

On 2 December 2021, the Ministry emailed you to advise you of the need to extend your request in accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Act. The reason for the extension was that the Ministry required more time for necessary consultations. The due date of your request was extended to 31 December 2021.

The public housing register is a dynamic service. It does not operate on a 'first come first served' basis, but rather the Ministry aims to house those with the most serious needs as a priority. This means that others with less serious needs may wait longer. The Ministry is responsible for assessing the housing need, however the longer wait times are a consequence of the shortage of public housing supply.

There is a high demand for housing – emergency, transitional and public housing – across the country, which is reflected in the enclosed data. The Government is committed to ensuring that all New Zealanders have access to long-term housing. Our priority is that everyone has somewhere warm, safe, and dry to live.

You may be interested to view the Public Housing plan which provides detail of the Public Housing supply intentions for the next four years using the following link: [https://www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/increasing-public-housing/public-housing-plan. \(hud.govt.nz\).](https://www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/increasing-public-housing/public-housing-plan. (hud.govt.nz).)

The Ministry has strong relationships with local government, non-government and other community organisations working together to support people who present with housing needs, as well as offering other wrap-around services people may need.

When a person makes an application for public housing, their eligibility is assessed on their ability to access suitable, adequate, affordable and sustainable housing. Further details about the criteria for public housing assessments is available on the Ministry's

website at: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/introduction.html.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will address your questions in turn:

1. What is the longest current wait time for social housing placement?

Please see enclosed **Table One**, in **Appendix A**, which outlines the total number of distinct clients housed and the average, median and maximum time to house, for the quarter ending 30 September 2021.

The Public Housing Register is not a time-ranked waitlist and is always changing. Each applicant on the Register is given a priority rating that is based on their circumstances and the urgency of their housing need. With the current housing shortage, getting matched to a house depends on how quickly a property becomes available, and how many other people with urgent needs are also waiting. This means that people with a lower priority tend to have longer wait times on the Register.

Please note that the longest wait time in the September quarter dates to Kainga Ora's stewardship of the register. The Ministry is committed to housing those in need. The applicant with the longest wait time in the September quarter has since been placed in a Public Housing property.

2. What is the longest current wait time for any review of decision yet to be heard regarding social housing?

On 30 November 2021, the Ministry emailed you advising of the need for you to clarify your request. As stated in this email, the social housing Review of Decision search has multiple subcategories, such as, eligibility or priority vs income related rent calculations.

On 1 December 2021, you replied to the Ministry and requested to see a response time from each category.

Please see enclosed **Table Two**, in **Appendix A**, which outlines the number of Review of Decision applications, the longest current wait times for a Review of Decision yet to be heard, broken down by social housing review category, for the quarter ending 30 September 2021.

The Ministry acknowledges that the wait times for escalating Review applications to a BRC Hearing have been unduly long for some applicants. The wait time has been due to administrative delays, exacerbated due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 alert level changes which meant BRC Hearing panels were unable to convene throughout the country. A few of the cases were delayed by applicants themselves who requested a postponement of the BRC Hearing. The Ministry has taken the matter on hand and are working towards resolving outstanding reviews. The review application with the longest wait time of 519 days in the quarter ending September 2021 has since been resolved.

There are a number of additional factors which can contribute to delays in the Review of Decision process. 45% of the Review of Decision applications that had not been heard, had reasons for the delays recorded on their files, such as:

- Awaiting further information from applicant
- Hearing time not available within the next 2 weeks
- Progress impacted by COVID-19
- Assigned to incorrect office
- Staff member unavailable to complete report
- Additional applicant papers requested
- Awaiting legal advice
- Panel member unavailable

The Ministry recognises the fundamental importance of the right to review under the Social Security Act 2018. Accordingly, the Ministry is working hard to reduce delays. However, there are some unpredictable factors that the Ministry is unable to prevent, such as COVID-19.

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 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 regarding the longest current wait time for social 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.

Ngā mihi nui

PP



Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing

Appendix A

Table One: The total number of distinct clients housed and the average, median and maximum time to house, for the quarter ending 30 September 2021.

Number Housed	Average Days to House	Median Days to House	Maximum Days to House
1,290	289	182	2,789

Notes for Table One:

- This includes applications on the Housing Register and the Transfer Register.
- This includes priority A and B applications.
- The average, median and maximum time to house have been rounded up to the nearest full day.
- The median time to house is the midpoint of the time to house values.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development 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.

Table Two: The number of Review of Decision (ROD) applications, the longest current wait times for a ROD yet to be heard, broken down by social housing review category, for the quarter ending 30 September 2021.

Social Housing review Category	Number of ROD applications	Longest current wait time in days for a ROD yet to be heard as at 30 September 2021
Assistance is recoverable	S	519
Being declined	6	165
Housing - amount of debt (Income Related Rent - IRR)	S	162
Housing - assessment of eligibility	S	141
Housing - rate of IRR	32	191
Housing - redirection of benefit	S	253
Housing - removal from waitlist	S	49
Housing - Support Product declined	S	4
Rate of payment	S	29

Notes for Table Two:

- The data consists of ROD applications under different categories of Social Housing, outstanding as per the Monthly Pivots provided by the Planning & Analysis team.
- The figures shown are of outstanding RODs where the 'assistance reviewed' was categorised as 'Housing' or 'Housing Support Product'.
- In order to protect confidentiality, suppression rules have been applied to numbers of 5 or less