



18 December 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your eleven emails of 20 November 2024, requesting information about housing support, including Social Housing and Emergency Housing. Please note we are responding to all your requests in this letter.

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

- 1. Number of phone calls to MSD for housing support information and assistance, by month and by month since 2017*

I have interpreted your request to refer to the number of calls where a client specifically requested to speak about Social Housing and was routed to the Ministry's housing phone line.

Please see the below **Appendix One** detailing the number of calls answered on all of the Ministry's standard housing phone lines for the period 1 January 2017 to 30 November 2024, broken down by month. Please note that the Ministry cannot centrally report on every housing related conversation that happens within the Ministry's contact centres on other service lines, such as the Work and Income general line. Clients may seek and receive information and assistance across a range of products during a singular phone call.

- 2. Total traffic (website visitors) to 'Apply for Emergency Housing' page by month, <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/housing/nowhere-to-stay/emergency-housing/index.html>, on MSD website since 2017. If possible please also provide the above website traffic data by month and by region since 2017*

The Emergency Housing page was first created on the Work and Income website in late 2019. As such, we have interpreted your request to mean from 2019 onwards.

Please see the attached **Appendix Two**, containing **Table One**: Number of views, sessions and total users for the 'nowhere to stay' Emergency Housing webpage, from August 2023 to November 2024 and **Table Two**: Number of page views and unique page views for the 'nowhere to stay' Emergency Housing webpage, from 1 January 2019 to 31 July 2023, by year.

Please also see **Table Three** of **Appendix Two**, which contains the number of views, sessions and total users for the 'nowhere to stay' Emergency Housing webpage, from August 2023 to November 2024, by region. Please note that the

regions are determined by Google and will not be the same as Work and Income regions. Regional information prior to August 2023 is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held.

3. Number of people on the Social Housing register with current situation recorded as 'sleeping in car', by month and region since 2017.

Please see the attached **Appendix Three** and refer to **Table One**, detailing the number of Social Housing primary applicants who have recorded 'living in a car' at the time of the application from January 2017 to October 2024, by month and region.

Where applicants may tell MSD they are 'living in a car' in their initial application (which may have been lodged in prior years) but will continue to be counted as living in a car subsequently - e.g. because they have not provided updated information to MSD.

For example, if hypothetically, the Public Housing Register showed 100 people living in cars for June 2023, it does not necessarily mean 100 people are living in cars as of June 2023. Rather, that there are 100 applications 'live' on the register as at June 2023 that have either initially or subsequently said they are living in a car, noting some people will have not updated their current living status with MSD.

If someone tells us they are living in a car, we record that in their application and then consider what assistance we can provide. That may be help sourcing private housing, a referral to a transitional housing provider or assistance in meeting the cost of emergency housing.

4. Number of new people being added to the Social Housing register who have never been on the Social Housing register since 2010, by month and by region.

Please see **Table Two** of the attached **Appendix Three**, detailing the number of new entry primary applicants to the Social Housing register from August 2015 to October 2024, by month and region. Prior to 2015, the Social Housing register was run by Kāinga Ora.

Prior to January 2017, Territorial Local Authority data is not reportable, so the regional breakdown is provided from January 2017 onwards. To retrieve Territorial Local Authority data prior to January 2017, Ministry staff would be required to review a substantial number of individual client files to find this information. As such, your request for the regional breakdown prior to 2017 is refused 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.

5. Reason and associate count (number or percentage) for people being removed from the Social Housing register, by month and by region, since 2017. Note: If by month is not possible, please supply the data by region and by year since 2017.

Please see **Table Three** of **Appendix Three** for the number of non-housed Social Housing register exits from January 2017 to October 2024, by month, reason for exit and region.

6. *Information requested: (1) Total number of applications for Emergency Housing from people who identify as Māori, by month and by region since 2017. (2) Total number of applications for Emergency Housing from people who identify as Pacific peoples, by month and by region since 2017.*

Please refer to **Tables Four and Five** of **Appendix Three**, containing the number of emergency housing applications (grants and declines) for Māori and Pacific Peoples from January 2017 to October 2024, by month, total response ethnicity and region.

7. *Average SAS risk rating (score) of people housed, by month and by region since 2017. Note: if the data is unable to be supplied 'by month', please supply data by year and by region since 2017.*

Please see **Table Six** of **Appendix Three**, detailing the number of primary applicants housed from the Social Housing Register from January 2017 to October 2024, by month, priority rating and region.

You will note that data in **Tables Three, Four, Five and Six** regarding some individuals is replaced with an 'S'. This information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

8. *Number of people MSD are placing into Boarding Houses by month and by region since 2017*
9. *What is the process that a MSD Case Manager follows prior to recommending or referring a person to a Boarding House?*
10. *For a person placed in a Boarding House as a permanent housing option, what percentage of their benefit (including add ons) is allocated to the cost of Boarding House rent? Please provide the data/information by month and by region since 2017.*

The Ministry does not place people in private accommodation such as boarding houses or hostels. People make their own decisions about whether accommodation is suitable for their needs. The Ministry has no power to tell people where to live or to inspect their living arrangements. The Ministry also does not have legislative powers to carry out building inspections or monitor compliance with the building regulations.

We think it is important that everyone who comes to us with an urgent housing need is informed of all the options they have for avoid homelessness. We are aware that some service centres have internal lists designed to be a resource for staff to help people to identify local accommodation options across the city. This information has been sourced from public websites and local knowledge. It is not generally something that is provided to clients.

As such, your request for information about people placed in boarding houses is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is either held by or

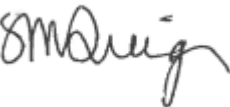
closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

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.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request regarding Emergency Housing and 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. 

Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services



Appendix One

Table One: Number of calls answered on all of the Ministry's standard housing phone lines for the period of 1 January 2017 to 30 November 2024, broken down by month.

Month	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	17,985	22,731	24,626	23,184	18,783	16,829	16,793	20,943
February	18,296	24,166	21,246	22,160	17,960	17,095	16,474	21,562
March	20,706	25,237	21,920	20,992	22,335	18,882	20,780	20,850
April	15,476	20,708	20,803	10,813	17,272	16,022	15,424	21,376
May	20,139	23,614	24,748	19,595	19,940	19,779	20,420	23,330
June	17,452	20,198	21,422	20,384	20,285	17,042	17,171	18,959
July	18,778	23,141	28,007	22,460	21,132	17,192	16,959	22,839
August	22,504	25,892	26,883	20,964	19,824	20,259	20,388	22,765
September	21,688	23,846	26,048	22,781	19,834	18,016	18,975	21,476
October	21,525	25,017	24,833	20,727	19,277	17,667	19,670	21,376
November	21,876	24,246	21,464	20,176	20,667	19,092	20,576	20,379
December	17,142	18,057	17,204	15,836	15,700	13,669	15,370	-
Total	233,567	276,853	279,204	240,072	233,009	211,544	219,000	235,855

Notes:

- The above includes the calls answered on all of our standard housing lines (Applications, IRR, Provider, Screening, Transfers, Waitlist and WI Welfare).