



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

7 February 2024

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 18 December 2023, requesting information about Emergency Housing in Hamilton. 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 separately below.

How many complaints have been registered against motels in Hamilton since 2018? annual data, please. What are the popular complaints and what does MSD do about it?

Please find the attached **Appendix**, containing **Table One**: Complaints regarding Emergency Housing in the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2023, broken down by site.

You will note that suppressed data has been 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.

Please note that this is not broken down by year. Breaking this information down by year would require the Ministry to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair the Ministry's ability to continue standard operations and would be an inefficient use of the Ministry's resources. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, requires substantial collation. 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 requests 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 most common complaint types are regarding safety concerns and property conditions. A breakdown of complaint types is provided in **Table One**.

Those who supply emergency accommodation to clients are expected to meet all the relevant regulatory standards imposed by regulatory authorities, including local councils. When concerns are raised about the quality of accommodation, regional managers follow-up directly with the supplier to resolve any issues around quality or service. Where issues cannot be resolved in a timely way, suitable alternative accommodation will be sought for the client.

When a complaint about a supplier is received, it is referred to the Regional Housing Manager to manage the complaint. The complaint is acknowledged, if not resolved, within 24 hours. The Regional Housing Manager will:

- Contact the supplier to discuss the complaint.
- Contact the EH occupant to discuss the complaint and clarify any other issues.
- After discussing the complaint with both the EH occupant and supplier, they will decide whether the complaint can be resolved.
- If after the discussion there is no positive outcome, then alternative options will be discussed with the EH occupant. If appropriate, the EH occupant may need to be relocated to another supplier.
- Once alternative options have been discussed with the occupant, the complaint can be resolved.
- If the supplier is willing to address the issues that the occupant has raised, then the complaint can be resolved.

The Regional Housing Manager may contact other agencies, such as Police or local authorities, if there is any concern about the supplier meeting legal or regulatory requirements.

The Ministry, alongside the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), reviewed the Emergency Housing system and recommended 10 actions to improve the system. In December 2022, Cabinet agreed to the joint recommendations to improve the system.

In 2023, the Ministry introduced new opt-in standards for suppliers. Suppliers sign a declaration when they sign up to the standards, undertaking that they understand and will meet the standards. By introducing these minimum standards, we can ensure all whānau have access to safe and suitable accommodation.

A key driver of the standards is to make sure that people staying in Emergency Housing get the same level of service, and are treated with the same care and respect, as any other paying guest. This is just one aspect of our overall work to strengthen the Emergency Housing system.

What is the longest duration for anyone living in the emergency housing motels in Hamilton?

Please find the attached **Appendix**, containing **Table Two**: Longest consecutive weeks in Emergency Housing for the Hamilton District Territorial Local Authority (TLA) as at the end of each quarter for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Overall, the numbers of households in emergency housing in Hamilton City has fallen by one-third over a 12-month period. As at the end of November 2023, the Ministry was supporting 519 households with emergency housing in Hamilton City, compared to 765 households in November 2022.

Emergency housing has been an important support for those who would otherwise be homeless. This decline has been the result of intensive work to support people in emergency housing to move into more sustainable housing, whether that be private rentals, transitional housing or public housing. We also fund Ready to Rent courses to help people with the knowledge and tools to successfully obtain and sustain tenancies.

How many people have you transferred from the emergency housing motels to transitional housing or private rentals? In the last five years - annual data.

The Ministry does not centrally record this information. If it is held, it would be found on individual client 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.

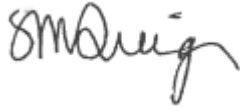
I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your requests given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal detailed removed, 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 in Hamilton, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Magnus O'Neill', written in a cursive style.

pp.

Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services