

## Sam Foster

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**From:** Christine Hyndman  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 November 2019 9:11 AM  
**To:** Andrew Craig  
**Cc:** Craig Forbes; Victoria Hodgson  
**Subject:** The Policy and Budget funding background to the allowance paid to people released on conditions [UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** Out of Scope

Until 2001, asylum claimants at the border were

- granted a work permit (= visa), which enabled them to claim emergency benefits (only if their identity was certain) – many then resided at the Grove Road hostel, which had been set up by an NGO, the Auckland Refugee Council and which was funded through the accommodation portion of their benefits (it received an emergency top up in 2000 following an urgent call to the new Labour-led government)
- detained at the MRRC until they could satisfy NZIS of their identity (at which point they were released and could go to Grove Road) or until they could be removed, or
- if deemed a security risk, detained in Mt Eden prison.

Note that people who are not granted a visa are subject to turnaround provisions – ie if they are found not to be a refugee they can be removed on the “next available flight” at the expense of the airline that brought them in, even a couple of years later. As they are not lawfully in New Zealand they do not have a right to make a visa application or appeal. This reduces the overall costs of removals.

NZIS received 2001 Budget funding of \$0.4m for food, security and a supervisor for the detainees. (The Tampa crisis in June 2001 led to the Tampa arrivals being detained / housed at the MRRC and a further \$1.8m million in one-off funding – not specifically relevant to this issue but it put pressure on the MRRC’s capacity.)

Later in 2001, ie immediately following 9/11 many fewer people claiming at the border were granted work permits and released into the community and most were then either housed at the MRRC or in Mt Eden. This led to concerns by the Auckland Refugee Council about the hostel’s financial viability. There were also issues about the MRRC’s capacity, as well as its suitability for housing people who were detained alongside refugees.

The Government approved funding of \$0.6m per annum in Budget 2002 to pay for asylum seekers not granted work permits (=work visas) who were accommodated in the hostel. The documents attached show that they received a weekly allowance of \$70 in addition to having their board costs covered.

[From documents that are not attached] Concerns were subsequently raised about asylum seekers being turned away from the hostel when it was full. The High Court found at some point before mid-2002 and that too many people were being detained, which led to more being released on conditions.

Budget 2004 increased funding to also enable the housing of people appealing removal (mostly former refugee status seekers). It increased the weekly allowance and proposed that it be paid to people released on conditions as well as to people housed in the hostel. The template reads:

The first initiative is a contract with a non-governmental organisation to run a hostel in Auckland, primarily to house asylum seekers not granted a permit at the border. It is proposed that it also be available to house people with children who are appealing removal (primarily unsuccessful former refugee status seekers) who are not eligible for a permit and who therefore may neither work nor receive a benefit. Housing New Zealand Corporation has expressed interest in using the proposed additional hostel capacity as transit accommodation for some refugee quota members who are being resettled in Auckland, where housing is not yet available, and the Ministry of Social Development has also expressed interest in purchasing some accommodation services for clients. The initiative also proposes increasing the weekly allowance for food, clothing and medication paid to people released on conditions from the current \$70 per week to \$85 per week, and proposes that this be paid to all persons released on conditions, rather than only those persons housed in hostels, as at present. The cost is offset by funding provided in the 2002 Budget for community-based accommodation. The initiative seeks initial funding of \$0.854 million in 2004/05 and ongoing funding of \$0.445 million per annum (GST inclusive). A one off cost of \$0.017 million in 2005/06 for an evaluation is also included.

At some point INZ / NZIS decided to stop contracting with the hostel and instead to just release people on conditions. Unfortunately they didn't involve Policy as far as I can tell so I can't find any documentation. I recall Heidi Smith at some point tweaking the amounts per week such that children received less than adults (ie rebalancing between family units and single claimants).

Nāku noa, nā

Christine Hyndman

PRINCIPAL POLICY ADVISOR | KAITOHUTOHU TINO

Immigration Policy – Labour, Science and Enterprise Group | Te Wāhanga Kaupapa-ā-Manene – Te Pūnaha Hiringa Whakaea

Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment | Te Manatū Pakihi, Auahatanga me Ngā Kaupapa ā-Mahi

Email - Īmera: christine.hyndman@mbie.govt.nz <mailto:christine.hyndman@mbie.govt.nz> | DDI – Waea Tōtika: +64 4 901 8575 | Mobile – Waea Pūkoro: s 9(2)(a) | Website – Pae-ipurangi: www.mbie.govt.nz <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/> | Postal – Poutāpeta: 15 Stout Street, PO Box 1473, Wellington 6145

NZBN 9429000106078