

11 MAR 2013

**NATIONAL OFFICE WELLINGTON**

80 Boulcott Street  
PO Box 2628, Wellington 6140  
Free phone 0800 801 601  
Tel 04 439 3000  
[www.hnzc.co.nz](http://www.hnzc.co.nz)

David Burgess  
fyi-request-709-240fe96d@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Burgess

Thank you for your email of 20 December 2012 to Housing New Zealand requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982:

- 1. What personal information does the Housing Corporation hold on its tenants?*
- 2. Does the Corporation share any information on its tenants with any other agencies, of so whom?*
- 3. Does the Corporation send information on tenants to Veda Advantage or any other credit agency, and if so, may tenants "opt-out" of this data sharing?*
- 4. Does the Corporation ever provide finance companies, debt collect agencies, or other agencies with personal information or address data on its tenants? If so how many releases were made in the last year?*
- 5. Who has requested personal information on tenants from the Corporation?*
- 6. When a tenant leaves Corporation housing is their personal information retained?*

I have considered your request under the Act, and can tell you that Housing New Zealand requests and holds personal information from its customers to help with assessing housing need, calculating Income-Related Rent, or to sustain a tenancy.

When assessing housing need, Housing New Zealand requires proof of identity, residency, income, and assets. Proof of income can include income statements, Studylink or Inland Revenue Department statements, or other financial statements. A customer's assets are assessed through bank statements and property valuations.

Housing New Zealand also requires evidence of a customer's current housing situation. This can include a notice of eviction or letter from a landlord, and statements or recommendations from Police or other social organisations. Housing New Zealand will also look to establish if there are other factors that make it difficult for the customer to access the private rental market, including any medical or disability needs.

Housing New Zealand also collects information about other people who are in the household, including proof of identification, marriage certificate or separation agreement, custody arrangements, and any applicable income.

Housing New Zealand does not share information except when the customer has given permission for us to do so, or where authorised by law. Housing New Zealand customers are asked to sign a privacy statement which gives us permission to request personal information from the following people or agencies:

- Work and Income
- Inland Revenue Department
- Accident Compensation Corporation
- The customer's employer, or any other person or organisation from which they receive income
- Immigration New Zealand
- Department of Corrections

Through the privacy statement, customers also give Housing New Zealand permission to give personal information about them or their household to the Ministry of Social Development. The Ministry uses this information to help identify people whose entitlement to Ministry products or services may need reassessment.

The privacy statement also provides information on Housing New Zealand's customer satisfaction surveys which are used to improve services. The surveys are done by an independent professional research agency on behalf of Housing New Zealand, and the results of these surveys do not identify our customers. Housing New Zealand customers can request that their personal information not be shared with any external agency or person at any time.

I can confirm that Housing New Zealand receives requests for tenant information from debt collection and other agencies. However, the number of these requests is not centrally recorded and would require extensive research to obtain. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act. This section provides that information can be refused if *"the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research."* I can tell you, however, that information is not provided to these agencies without consent from the customer.

Housing New Zealand retains information on its former tenants for up to 10 years, depending on the circumstances under which the tenancy ended. However, personal information may be held longer for tenants with outstanding rental debt, and indefinitely for tenants who have Crown debt.

I trust this information is useful. You have the right, under section 28(3) of the Act, to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse part of your request.

Yours sincerely



**Sharon Girvan**  
**Manager Government Relations (Acting)**