

17 OCT 2018

Miles Stratford
fyi-request-8740-f8d98250@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Miles

Thank you for your Official Information Act (the Act) request dated 23 September 2018, in which you asked for the following:

1/ Details of the policy associated with financial compensation (including replacement of personal possessions) and re-housing where there was no suspicion of the tenant being involved in meth related behaviour but meth residues were found in the property which exceeded the acceptable levels of meth in either the 2010 Ministry of Health Guidelines or the 2017 NZS8510.

2/ In the last five years, on a year by year basis, how many tenants have received financial compensation (including replacement of personal possessions) and re-housing where there was no suspicion of the tenant being involved in meth related behaviour but meth residues were found in the property which exceeded the acceptable levels of meth in either the 2010 Ministry of Health Guidelines or the 2017 NZS8510?

3/ In the last five years, on a year by year basis, what was the total cost of financially compensating these tenants, including replacement of personal possessions and re-housing where there was no suspicion of the tenant being involved in meth related behaviour but meth residues were found in the property which exceeded the acceptable levels of meth in either the 2010 Ministry of Health Guidelines or the 2017 NZS8510?

Regarding your first question, since the release of the Chief Scientist's report on 29 May 2018, Housing New Zealand has focused on identifying and working with tenants whose tenancies had been ended due to methamphetamine contamination, under our previous policy. This new focus involved setting up a dedicated Meth Assistance Team, and two communication channels for those affected by Housing New Zealand's historic approach, to make contact (Meth Line 0800 006 077 and meth.enquiries@hnzc.co.nz).

Since 2 October 2018, Housing New Zealand has been publishing up to date information on its progress with the Meth Assistance Programme at www.hnzc.co.nz/for-our-tenants-and-their-communities/our-tenants/health-and-safety/making-it-right-methamphetamine-contamination-in-our-homes/. As at 15 October 2018, 162 people had been in contact and of these, 11 cases are in progress.

Those who contact our Meth Assistance Programme are encouraged to provide as much detail as is possible, about their circumstances. Assistance, in whatever form it takes, will be discussed and progressed with affected tenants at the earliest opportunity. The Meth Assistance team will ensure each case is treated with respect and that the most appropriate form of assistance is developed for each tenant, taking into account all their circumstances.

This is a genuine process and the team will take a comprehensive, considered approach to how the right form of assistance is assessed for our tenants.

Housing New Zealand is still finalising the formal documentation behind its new approach. Accordingly, your first request is declined under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the Act to *'maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expressions of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty'*.

You have also asked for information about the number of tenants that received compensation and rehousing under Housing New Zealand's previous approach to methamphetamine testing, and the cost of this over a five year period.

Pre-29 May 2018, if Housing New Zealand deemed a home uninhabitable because of concerns about methamphetamine contamination, it did not *'compensate'* the tenant if they had to be relocated. Rather, if in these circumstances, the tenant remained eligible for a Housing New Zealand home, and was to be relocated, the usual approach was taken to consider all reasonable costs related to the move into the new home. For example, reasonable moving costs and the cost of disconnection and reconnection charges for gas, power, and telephone. The relocation cost in each case was assessed on its own merits and there was no overall approach whereby a set amount was made available in all cases.

Your requests numbered two and three are therefore refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information requested *'is not held by the department or Minister of the Crown or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation, or by a local authority.'*

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with Housing New Zealand's decision to decline to provide some of the information you requested. You can reach that office at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling toll free on 0800 802 602. If you have any questions about this response, you can reach the Government Relations Team at enquiries1@hnzc.co.nz or by calling our Customer Support Centre on 0800 801 601.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Kelly
Manager Government Relations Team