



## Briefing

COVID-19 Response: Self-isolation accommodation for vulnerable people			
Date:	24 March 2020	Security level:	In Confidence
Priority:	High	Report number:	BRF19/20030595

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Dr Megan Woods Minister of Housing	To note.	25 March 2020

Contact for discussion			
Name	Position	Telephone	1 <sup>st</sup> contact
Jo Hogg	Acting DCE, Funding and Programme Delivery		s 9(2)(a) ✓

Other agencies consulted

### Minister's office to complete

<input type="checkbox"/> Noted
<input type="checkbox"/> Seen
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved
<input type="checkbox"/> Needs change
<input type="checkbox"/> Not seen by Minister
<input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined
<input type="checkbox"/> Referred to (specify)
_____

Comments

Date returned to MHUD:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Briefing

### COVID-19 Response: Self-isolation accommodation for vulnerable people

**For:** Hon Dr Megan Woods, Minister of Housing

**Date:** 24 March 2020

**Security level:** In Confidence

**Priority:** High

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#### Purpose

1. To respond to you questions about:
  - a. The level of demand for accommodation for vulnerable people who need to self-isolate, such as kaumatua and people who stay in night shelters, boarding houses, and other accommodation that may have shared facilities and may be unsuitable for self-isolation.
  - b. Supply options to house vulnerable people when we move to Level 4 of the COVID-19 Alert System.
  - c. Legislative impediments to implementing those supply options.
  - d. Confirmation that housing providers are essential services when we move to Level 4, as are services associated with their operations e.g. cleaners.

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#### Recommended actions

2. It is recommended that you:

1. **Note** the contents of this briefing.

*Noted*

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Jo Hogg  
Acting DCE, Funding and Programme  
Delivery

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Hon Dr Megan Woods  
Minister of Housing

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## Demand from vulnerable people for accommodation during Level 4

### Rough sleepers

3.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Table 1 fed into the 2019 Budget Bid 'Ending Street Homelessness'

Table 1: Information from homeless counts, providers, and Councils about rough sleeper numbers

Location	Information
Auckland	336 rough sleepers counted at Point In Time count on 17 September 2018 (but estimate is about 800 people without shelter based on a post-count validation exercise).
Wellington	Based on a Wellington City Council report in 2016, 148 people were contacted by outreach. 49 of these were sleeping rough and 48 were begging.
Christchurch	Approximately 192 rough sleepers were counted over a two week period in September 2017 (based on findings from Christchurch Methodist Mission).
Hamilton	Initial estimates indicated there were 80 known homeless people in Hamilton's central city. Based on information from The People's Project Hamilton, the estimate is that there may be close to 700 people, using the fullest definition of homelessness.
Tauranga	Based on information provided by Tauranga City Council, estimates place the number of homeless people at 470 in November 2017. Of these, 70 were chronically homeless.
Rotorua	In February 2018, an estimated 48 people were counted as homeless based on information received from Lifewise and LinkPeople.

### Transitional housing and night shelter places

4. Table 2 provides an estimate of the transitional housing and night shelter places operating with shared facilities for which we consider additional motel units will be required to restrict spread of COVID-19.

Table 2: Transitional housing and night shelter places with shared facilities

Location	Number of Individuals / Households understood to be in places with shared facilities	Estimated Number of units required to reduce risk / enable isolation
Kaitia	44	22
Auckland	481	260
Hamilton	33	16
Tauranga	40	20
Rotorua	45	45
Palmerston North	22	10
Fielding	11	5
Wellington	108	70
Christchurch	88	44
Balclutha	6	3
Invercargill	6	3
Dunedin	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>501</b>

5. Note that this table:

- a. Assumes that the estimated units required have a 2:1 ratio except where specific circumstances are known (e.g. Wellington, Rotorua)
- b. Does not include 203 Womens' Refuge Safehouses, where the occupancy make up is not known
- c. Does not include public housing where the few shared places are either for older persons/kaumatua or the Compass Housing places in Mangere, Papatoetoe where each unit would meet minimum needs for isolation (i.e. having a kitchenette and ensuite).

## Supply options for these vulnerable people during COVID-19 Alert System Level 4

6. We are contracting with urgency as many places as we can before New Zealand moves to Level 4 of the COVID-19 Alert System.
7. As at 2pm, 23 March 2020, the following motel places were confirmed (but not physically contracted yet), or being sought in Housing First locations.
  - a. Whangarei – 9 units
  - b. Auckland – 24 units
  - c. Tauranga – There are three motels that are interested; number of units available to be confirmed
  - d. Rotorua – Currently working with Council and Kāinga Ora on securing number of units
  - e. Hamilton – Struggling to get hold of anyone here and of those contacted, they are already working with another agency
  - f. Napier/Hastings – Still in progress
  - g. Wellington – 19 units
  - h. Blenheim – 8 units
  - i. Nelson – 19 units
  - j. Christchurch – 11 units
8. We have focused on Housing First regions as they will have the most demand for new supply options in response to COVID-19. We are contacting all of our Housing First providers to confirm that they are able to provide services to these places, and to make sure they have the support from HUD that they need to do this.
9. Through our work with Māori providers, the following opportunities are also being progressed to address specific concerns:

Location/Organisation	Issue	Options	Outcome
Rotorua Visions of a Helping Hand	Night Shelter – rough sleepers and high needs	Move to more stable facilities.	Motel being investigated which can sleep over 200 people
	Boarding House – Shared Facilities and overcrowding	Relocate people to reduce possible spread of infection	5 houses – Destiny Church 4 houses – following week
Far North Whaingaroa	Whanau returning from overseas and Auckland who need to self-isolate	Isolate infected whanau	Exploring camping ground – Longsdale

Te Aupouri (Far North)	Isolating whanau returning to homelands and moving in with kaumatua, isolating them (6-8 people in two bedroom)	Isolate infected whanau	Seeking option for relief. Could use portacom (see below)
Te Puea Memorial Marae	Prepare for Isolation options to contain possible spread of infection in whanau at the marae	Isolate infected whanau – Camper Vans (2)	Investigating using two campervans

10. HUD has also found 13 to 17 portacom units that are ready now and could be used to support marae and whanau in need.

### Legislative impediments to implementing these supply options

11. We understand that the COVID-19 Omnibus Bill is already in the final stages of drafting and is likely to be passed tomorrow (25 March 2020). Therefore, it is unlikely that we could pass any necessary legislative changes to enable the supply that will be needed when we are at Level 4.
12. There may be some legislative impediments to bringing on supply urgently needed to accommodate people adequately while we are at Level 4. These include, the Building Act and Building Regulations (for example, consenting requirements related to a ‘change of use’), Resource Management Act (for example, zoning constraints), Reserves Act (if we look to put relocatable accommodation on a reserve), and the Public Works Act (if we have to acquire land for more accommodation). However, we understand that:
  - a. s 9(2)(g)(i)
  - b. There are significant powers under the Epidemic Preparedness Act to alter legislation, and under the Health Act to requisition properties for quarantine.
  - c. Government agencies are already expecting between 10 to 100 modification order requests to be made under the Epidemic Preparedness Act. If necessary, we can use this mechanism to overcome legal constraints. Crown Law are working with other agencies on guidance on the process for requesting the orders, which will be available following Parliament’s consideration on 25 March 2020 of the epidemic notice issued yesterday by the Government.
13. If we find specific impediments to bringing on supply in certain locations, we will explore whether any of the mechanisms in a-c can be used.

### Housing providers will be considered essential services

14. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) have assured housing providers that they will be considered an essential service. Excerpts of our communications to the sector on this are attached as Annex A.
15. As at 24 March 2020, the Government COVID-19 website includes the following information about which businesses are considered essential:

Sectors	Entities providing essential services (including their supply chains)
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<p><b>Accommodation</b></p> <p>Lead agency: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment</p>	<p>Any entity that provides accommodation services for essential workers, isolation/quarantine, and emergency housing</p>
<p><b>Building and construction</b></p> <p>Lead agency: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment</p>	<p>Any entity involved in building and construction related to essential services and critical infrastructure</p> <p>Any entity involved in building and construction required immediately to maintain human health and safety at home or work</p> <p>Any entity that performs or is involved in building and resource consenting necessary for the above purposes</p>
<p><b>Social services</b></p> <p>Lead Agency: Ministry of Social Development/Oranga Tamariki</p>	<p>Those entities, including non-government organisations, that provide welfare and social services to meet immediate needs, to be specified jointly by the Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki</p>

16. In addition, HUD and MSD plan to send a letter to all providers confirming that they are an essential service, and that their suppliers – such as cleaners – are also essential services.
17. MSD and Oranga Tamariki are also working with agencies to provide more detailed guidance about what constitutes an essential service. We will support this work.

### Next steps

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18. We will continue to update you on new supply that we source to support vulnerable people that may need to self-isolate.

## Annex A: Communication from government agencies to providers regarding whether they are essential services

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19. On 23 March 2020, MSD provided the following information to its social service providers, many of whom are also contracted to by HUD for housing and support services.

What is an essential social service?

Essential social services at Alert Level 4 are those that meet one or more of the following four criteria.

1. Where the social service is the only way for people accessing food and other goods they need to survive (eg, money management (but not budget advice), food banks, and other delivery of essential goods).
2. A social service that provides and supports a place for someone to live (eg, Supported Accommodation, Housing First, Residences, Bail Hostels, Night Shelters, Family Homes, remand homes, foster carers of children in state care, resettlement services for recent migrants and refugees).
3. A social service that supports disabled people to maintain critical wellbeing (eg, disability services for those with high needs or very high needs, and excluding disability employment services).
4. Crisis support for people who are unsafe (eg, Funded helplines, refuges and family violence services, foster care support services, sexual violence crisis services).

On 23 March 2020, HUD provided the following information to its housing and support services providers.

Essential services such as supermarkets, doctors, pharmacies, service stations, access to essential banking services will continue to be available. Level 4 restrictions will be in place for at least a month.

At a high-level our understanding is essential services includes agencies and non-government organisations that provide welfare and social services to maintain the wellbeing of people. We are working through the final classification of essential services as they related to housing and service providers and will confirm the arrangements with you Tuesday.