

[REDACTED]

Ref: H201902906

Dear [REDACTED]

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 6 May 2019 for:

*"Recently my partner had a housing assessment for modifications to our HNZ house, Occupational therapy visited my partner at her house to do the assessment, My partner was informed that Ministry of health has allocated her around \$8000 to be used for modifications, Occupational Therapist informed my partner that she was not allowed two handrails, she was only allowed one at the front door but not the back door, and that this was Ministry of health guild-lines? This seriously beggars believe, Is my partner only allowed to be safe going out her front door without falling and feeling safe and not her back door?, My partner also has trouble opening round door handles due to severe arthritis in her hands, Yet changing to lever action door handles was not offered even though my partner brought the matter up. In other words, if there was a fire, my partner would be lucky to survive if home alone. She has also just had a hip operation and has now been waiting nearly year for her knee replacement, Under the official information act i would like a reply concerning the matters i have raised on her behalf."*

On 22 May 2019 your request for information was transferred to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) from the Office of the Minister of Health.

I am sorry to hear of your partner's health and disability issues and the impact on her life. The Ministry's Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) provide funding towards equipment and modifications for people with disabilities. The EMS Housing Modification Manual sets out the criteria and guidelines for accessing funding towards housing modifications. Section 5.1. of the EMS Housing Modification Manual states that *"handrails may be provided for one entry/exit point into the home to provide an accessible route from the doorway to the nearest point to where a vehicle can reasonably be parked"*. The Ministry will not generally fund modifications to an alternative access unless there are genuine and exceptional circumstances.

The EMS Housing Modification Manual does not specifically refer to the replacement of turning door handles with lever operated handles. However, consideration can be given to installing lever door handles for essential rooms for people who live alone or who are at home alone for an extended period of time, for example when a partner is at work. If your partner is in this situation you may wish to go back to your current assessor to raise this issue and see if it can

be addressed. You may also ask for a second assessment if you are unhappy with the outcome of that discussion.

The waiting time for knee replacements is outside of the Ministry's scope and this would need to be addressed by your local District Health Board (DHB). This part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information is not held by the Ministry. You are able to raise your concerns about the waiting time for your partner's knee replacement with your local DHB through the complaints process on its website.

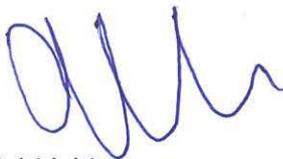
The Ministry's EMS Housing Modifications Manual can be found at <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/housing-modification-manual-aug2014.pdf>

Further information regarding housing modifications for people with disabilities can be found on the Ministry website at <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/disability-services/types-disability-support/equipment-and-modifications-disabled-people/housing-modifications-disabled-people>

I trust that this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please note that this letter, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adri Isbister', with a stylized, cursive style.

Adri Isbister  
**Deputy Director-General  
Disability**