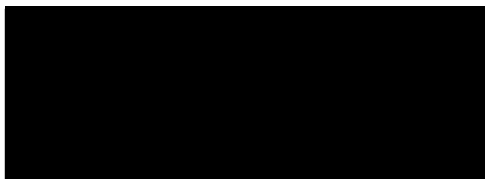




**Hospital Services**

North Shore Hospital Campus  
Shakespeare Road, Takapuna  
Private Bag 93-503, Takapuna  
Auckland 0740  
Telephone: 09 489 0527  
Facsimile: 09 486 8339

11 December 2018



Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: Official Information Act request – Patients referred to private providers**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request, received 23 November 2018 seeking the following of Waitemata District Health Board (DHB):

*A breakdown of all instances between January 1 and November 1 2018 where the DHB referred overflow patients in the following departments to private hospitals and clinics in Auckland.*

- emergency department
- surgical
- diagnostic imaging (such as MRI, CT, PET scans)

*Please specify which department the patient was referred from and the purpose of the referral. Please also advise when possible which hospital/clinic the overflow patient was referred to.*

*If vouchers are given to overflow patients who are referred to private hospitals and clinics, please advise the number of vouchers given out by the DHB in this calendar year, broken down by month and by department.*

On the same date as your request was received, Waitemata DHB contacted you seeking clarification on behalf of the metro Auckland DHBs over what was intended by the reference to “overflow patients” as this is not a term used in our services.

On 23 November, you responded that the question should be seen as: “any patients who have been outsourced to private hospitals/clinics by the DHB who have been waiting exceedingly long in either the emergency department or on waiting lists for treatment or tests”.

On the same date, the DHB contacted you again to clarify your definition of “exceedingly long” in order to exclude those from our response that did not meet this threshold.

On 26 November, you responded with: “I’m wanting all records of instances where the DHB has moved/transferred/referred a patient on a waiting list in the public sector or waiting in a DHB emergency department to the private sector. I do not have a timeframe in mind.”

Waitemata DHB has endeavoured to respond to your questions as we understand them following receipt of your second clarification.

---

Please note that the information provided represents the total number of Waitemata DHB patients who have been referred to private providers and that no assumptions should be made about the length of time they had been on public waiting lists or how long they might have expected to wait to receive care in the public system.

Decisions about the urgency of individual patients' care are carefully considered based on clinical evidence and specialist assessment to ensure the most-appropriate care is provided to each person and to protect the public system's capacity to prioritise those with greatest need.

#### **Emergency Department voucher system**

Waitemata DHB operates two Emergency Departments (EDs), one at North Shore Hospital and the other at Waitakere Hospital. The voucher scheme enables us to ensure that patients who present with low-acuity health issues are able to be seen in a timely way and in a clinical setting appropriate to their condition. It has also assisted in cementing productive working relationships with our neighbouring accident and medical clinics.

ED vouchers issued by North Shore Hospital Emergency Department are redeemed at the nearby Shorecare Urgent Care Clinics, Smales Farm or Northcross and those issued by Waitakere Hospital Emergency Department are redeemed at the nearby Whitecross Henderson Urgent Care Clinic. The ED voucher system is used at peak times to ensure that patients receive timely care that is appropriate to their health needs. Patients who present at the ED with relatively straight forward issues that can be more appropriately treated in an accident and medical clinic setting may be offered a voucher at times when there is heavy demand on our EDs.

This is good for the patient as it supports them to receive the level of care their condition requires in a timely manner. It also helps the DHB protect our finite specialist emergency medicine resources so they can be focused on those patients who are genuinely in need of emergency or life-saving treatment.

The DHB ultimately meets the cost of treatment, regardless of whether it is provided in the ED or in an accident and medical clinic setting under the voucher system. It is far more cost-effective to have patients who do not need emergency care treated under the voucher system.

It is also important to note that our EDs at North Shore and Waitakere hospitals manage more than 120,000 presentations per year combined and vouchers are used in a relatively small percentage of cases. People who need emergency treatment are treated in the ED and then admitted to inpatient wards as required.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

#### **Emergency Department - voucher patient referrals**

<b>2018</b>	<b>North Shore Hospital</b>	<b>Waitakere Hospital</b>
January	554	479
February	507	346
March	489	363
April	426	316
May	482	304
June	536	356
July	560	445
August	642	519
September	530	407
October	490	351

## Outsourcing of surgical and diagnostic procedures

Where appropriate, the DHB uses alternative providers to ensure patients receive timely access to treatment when our own systems are under heavy demand. Using the capacity of the wider health system in this way prevents unnecessary delays for Waitemata-domiciled patients.

### Endoscopy Outsourcing

Waitemata DHB has outsourced the procedures below to Auckland DHB, MacMurray Gastroenterology and Endoscopy Centre and Waitemata Endoscopy.

2018	Colonoscopy			Gastroscopy		
	ADHB	Waitemata Endoscopy	MacMurray	ADHB	Waitemata Endoscopy	MacMurray
January	41	48		19	1	
February	40	104		31	0	
March	35	116		25	0	
April	32	76		18	1	
May	34	111		28	0	
June	35	112		36	0	
July			61			36
August			236			63
September			212			43
October			225			68

### Radiology

The Radiology Department at Waitemata outsource scans to several private radiology groups: Horizon, The Radiology Group, Specialist Radiology Group, Mercy Radiology Group, Auckland Radiology Group and Ascot.

Please find below the number of patients who received their scans outside the DHB from 1 January to 31 October 2018.

	MR			CT			US		PET	
	ARG	SRG	TRG	ARG	Mercy	TRG	Horizon	TRG	Ascot	Mercy
January	15		17	25		23	121	91	20	23
February			63			135	424	184	14	14
March			88			166	728	402	12	19
April			87			147	690	330	13	14
May			115			186	613	431	20	20
June	54	76	141			234	448	431	11	19
July		14	86			156	512	10	11	19
August		66	85			187	696	2	14	22
September		14	86	118	48	211	793		18	23
October		82	80	166	45	221	822		14	19

### Surgical

No surgical referrals / outsourcing were sent out over this period.

I trust that this information meets your requirements. Waitemata DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare.

This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

---

If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cath', written in a cursive style.

**Cath Cronin**  
**Director Hospital Services**  
**Waitemata District Health Board**