



26 March 2021



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Non-resident admissions

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 10 March 2021 seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about non-resident admissions and associated costs.

You requested the following information:

I'm looking into the number of non-residents who are admitted to Waitematā DHB clinics and hospitals. What I'm looking for is the number of non-residents (those who are not in the country legally) treated for each of the last five years, and what percentage that is of total admittances.

Also, I wonder if you can help me answer a question, but what happens to the bill/costs. Are these people liable or is that debt written off? If that is written off, are you able to provide me with the amount for the same period, please?

We contacted you on 11 March to advise that we were able to provide information relating to non-residents but that we do not hold data on, "those who are not in the country legally". You agreed to remove this part of your request.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,500 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

Auckland is New Zealand's international gateway, with a highly multicultural population and it should be anticipated that our treatment costs for ineligible non-resident patients are higher

than for other parts of the country. For this reason, caution is advised against comparing figures provided by a metro Auckland DHB with other DHBs around the country.

New Zealand citizens or permanent residents are entitled to publicly funded healthcare. Non-residents who are ineligible for free healthcare in New Zealand are not refused urgent or emergency treatment but may be expected to meet the cost of care.

For full details on eligibility criteria, visit: <http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/patients-visitors/do-you-have-to-pay/treatment-eligibility/>

The figures provided in this response are for non-residents who are ineligible for free healthcare in New Zealand.

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

- 1. The number of non-residents treated for each of the last five years and what percentage that is of total admittances.**

Table 1: Number and percentage of non-residents who are ineligible for free healthcare, treated for financial years 2016-2020

Financial year	Non-residents treated per financial year	Patients treated (ED, Inpatient and Outpatient services, including Mental Health)	Percentage of non-residents against total treated (%)
2015-2016	1,590	174,890	0.91
2016-2017	1,619	179,930	0.90
2017-2018	1,479	181,455	0.82
2018-2019	1,400	184,103	0.76
2019-2020	1,327	181,450	0.73

Note: 'Admitted' has been interpreted as being the same as those treated, i.e. they may have been admitted for inpatient treatment, had an ED attendance or received outpatient services. Each patient has been counted only once in a given year.

- 2. What happens to the bill/costs? Are these people liable or is that debt written-off?**

As required by the Ministry of Health, Waitematā DHB follows a process to recover the costs of hospital services for non-resident patients who are not entitled to free healthcare. Such patients are invoiced and full settlement is required. When a full settlement is not possible, a payment plan is offered. If the payment plan is not fulfilled, the debt is written-off and the account is transferred to a debt collection agency for further recovery. Any payment collected is treated as bad debt recovered and is paid back (less a collection fee) to Waitematā DHB.

Non-eligible patients are not treated for non-acute services, regardless of whether they can pay or not. This means they are required to seek private treatment for non-acute conditions. However, as previously noted, ineligible non-resident patients are not refused urgent or emergency treatment but may be expected to meet the cost of their care.

- 3. If that is written-off, are you able to provide me with the amount for the same period, please?**

The table below shows the total amount written-off to bad debt each financial year for the past five years and does not necessarily relate to the invoices raised during that particular year. The

outstanding balance at the end of each financial year can relate to invoices raised in that particular year and/or invoices raised in previous years that have not yet been paid.

Table 2: Amounts written-off to bad-debt in the financial years from 2016-2020

Financial year (July-June)	Amount written-off to bad debts* (excl GST)
2015-2016	\$2,051,067.83
2016-2017	\$2,083,966.96
2017-2018	\$1,773,473.04
2018-2019	\$1,956,280.87
2019-2020	\$2,247,683.48

*Includes debt sent to debt collectors.

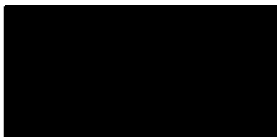
Waitematā DHB has an annual operating budget of \$2.03 billion. Therefore, the amount written-off to bad debt for urgent/emergency care provided to ineligible patients makes up 0.1% of our operating budget and should be seen in this context.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community 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 consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



**Executive Director Finance, People and Planning
Waitematā District Health Board**