



18 May 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: OIA request – Costs and flight hours for interhospital transfers**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received on 13 April seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about flight nurses and interhospital transfers via fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft.

On 3 May, we notified you that we transferred the following part of your request to the Ministry of Health (MoH) as follows:

**Question 15 - partial transfer: Who is the DHB currently under contract with to provide interhospital transfer by aircraft, when does the contract expire and what right of renewals exist within the contract?**

The MoH will provide a response in relation to rotary wing aircraft. Waitematā DHB will provide a response in relation to fixed wing aircraft.

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 8,600 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.

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

**1. How many currently registered flight nurses are employed by the DHB?**

Waitematā DHB does not employ registered flight nurses.

**2. What is the average remuneration of currently registered flight nurses employed by the DHB by qualification and seniority bands?**

Please see answer to Question 1 – not applicable.

3. For each of the last three complete financial years, how many flight hours have been charged to the DHB for interhospital (IHT) transfers by fixed wing aircraft?
4. For each of the last three complete financial years, how many flight hours have been charged to the DHB for interhospital transfers by rotary wing aircraft?

In response to questions 3 and 4, Waitematā DHB does not record the number of flight hours charged.

We are, therefore, refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(g)(i)(ii) of the Official Information Act 1982 as the information is not held, and there are no reasonable grounds to believe it is held by, or more closely connected with the functions of, another ministry or agency.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to seek a review is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Freephone 0800 802 602.

However, we are able to provide the annual spend for flights and related transfer costs for both fixed wing and rotary wing financial spend, combined – please see response to question 5.

5. For each of the last three complete financial years, how much has the DHB spent with third parties for interhospital transfers by fixed wing aircraft?

The following information is for total spend on interhospital transfers, including medical and/or nursing staff costs and road transportation to and from airports where needed. Please note that we do not record separate spend for fixed wing versus rotary wing interhospital transfers.

**Table 1: Waitematā DHB’s total spend on interhospital flight transfers for the last three financial years**

Financial years	Total spend on interhospital flight transfers – fixed and rotary wing
2017/18	\$106,547
2018/19	\$211,143
2019/20	\$180,813

6. For each of the last three complete financial years, how much has the DHB spent with third parties for interhospital transfers by rotary wing aircraft?

Please refer to the response to question 5.

7. For each of the last three complete financial years, what is the total number of flights for each destination for interhospital transfers for fixed wing aircraft?
8. For each of the last three complete financial years, what is the total number of flights for each destination for interhospital transfers for rotary wing aircraft?

Please refer to the response to questions 3 and 4. We only record information on the total amount spent on interhospital flight transfers, which is provided in response to question 5.

9. What metrics does the DHB use to measure service performance of service providers providing interhospital transfer services to the DHB for fixed wing aircraft?
10. What metrics does the DHB use to measure service performance of service providers providing interhospital transfer services to the DHB for rotary wing aircraft?

Waitematā DHB does not have any specific measures. The National Ambulance Sector Office (NASO) service specifications are available on the MoH website at:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/national-ambulance-sector-office-naso/emergency-ambulance-services-eas/eas-providers/emergency-ambulance-service-generic-service-agreements>

**11. What business rules or agreements are in place with other DHBs for cost-sharing for interhospital transfers for fixed wing aircraft?**

Business rules for cost-sharing with other DHBs for interhospital transfers for fixed wing aircraft are available at:

<https://nsfl.health.govt.nz/accountability/operational-policy-framework-0/operational-policy-framework-202021>

Please refer to Clause 6.13.1 and 6.13.2. Note that “DoD” refers to “DHB of Domicile”.

**12. What business rules or agreements are in place with other DHBs for cost-sharing for interhospital transfers for rotary wing aircraft?**

The following response has been provided by NASO:

*NASO establishes the hourly rate and invoices DHBs for the number of interhospital transfers (IHTs) hours flown. This was first established through a variation to the Crown Funding Agreement.*

*DHBs are responsible for funding their own IHTs; however, there are two exceptions as follows:*

*MoH pays: for urgent IHTs when a patient is transferred from one medical facility to another within three hours of arriving at the first facility. The exception to this is the Northern Region.*

*ACC pays: for urgent IHTs when a patient is transferred from one publicly-funded hospital to another within 24 hours and the first hospital is not able to meet patient's needs at that time.*

*Each month, DHBs are sent a list of IHT missions for patients that are domiciled to their DHB (excluding those where the provider indicates the mission should be covered by ACC for an urgent transfer).*

*The DHB advises if they accept the cost(s) or whether they should be sent elsewhere i.e. Ministry of Health or another DHB.*

**13. What advice has the DHB provided to the Simpson Review team relating to patient transfers by aircraft?**

Waitematā DHB has no record of having provided advice relating to patient transfers by aircraft to the Simpson review.

**14. What growth forecasts has the DHB completed or commissioned relating to interhospital transfer demand?**

Waitematā DHB has not undertaken growth forecasts in relation to interhospital transfer demand.

**15. Who is the DHB currently under contract with to provide interhospital transfer by aircraft, when does the contract expire and what right of renewals exist within the contract?**

Part of this question, relating to rotary wing aircraft only, was transferred to the Ministry of Health on 3 May 2021.

In relation to interhospital transfers by fixed wing aircraft, due to the infrequent nature of this service, Waitematā DHB does not hold formal contracts with suppliers.

Auckland DHB administers a regional contract on behalf of Waitematā DHB for ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation for heart-lung support) and PICU (paediatric intensive care unit) retrievals only.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decisions made in providing this response. Information about how to seek a review is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Freephone 0800 802 602.

I trust that the information we have been able to provide 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 Hospital Services  
Waitematā District Health Board**