



**Waitematā**  
District Health Board  
Best Care for Everyone

**Hospital Services**

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Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: Official Information Act request – Overdue/unreturned medical equipment**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 20 May 2019 seeking the following of Waitematā District Health Board (DHB):

*How many items are in use in the community currently? How much are they worth?  
How many of those are overdue? How much are those items worth?  
What sort of items do they include?  
What item is most-commonly un-returned? What is the most expensive piece of equipment which is currently overdue? How much is it worth?  
How can someone return items they are no longer using? Would people face a penalty when returning overdue items?*

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

Mobility aids and equipment play an important role in supporting patients to have greater independence and increased safety with activities of daily living in their home environment. Equipment can be loaned, rented or provided to patients on a permanent basis and each option requires a different administration and funding process.

Rental equipment is supplied directly by external providers, with the rental cost covered by Waitematā DHB. Equipment is provided for up to 42 days from discharge from hospital and requires further assessment and a new application for funding for longer periods. However, patients move through and across different services, making it difficult to track-and-trace rented equipment and to ensure equipment is collected at the right time in the patient's journey, resulting in some equipment being "lost" and written-off due to limited capacity to track-and-trace.

To overcome this, Waitematā DHB has successfully piloted a new system to track rental extensions and collection requests. A Centralised Equipment Team has recently been created to undertake this work. We expect this will result in an enhanced ability to monitor rental equipment that is overdue for return in future.

***How many items are in-use in the community currently? How much are they worth?***

The number of items supplied by Waitematā DHB on short-term rental varies over time, with some variance in volume month-to-month linked to changes in demand on health services. At the time of responding to this request, there were 2,300 individual items on rental.

As Waitematā DHB does not own the equipment, we are unable to comment on the current capital value of these items.

***How many of those are overdue? How much are those items worth?***

At the present time, our reporting systems are not able to give us a clear picture of the number of items that are truly "overdue" (where the clinical need for the equipment has passed). We monitor our longer-term rentals and investigate cases where length of rental is extended beyond expectation. At the start of the rental term, an anticipated return date is advised to the equipment provider. The provider will arrange to collect the equipment on that date. If the patient advises that they need the equipment for longer, a clinician is required to authorise the extension of any rental.

There are currently 425 items that have been leased for more than six months. Within this number, there are likely to be items that should either be returned as no longer needed or other options would be more appropriate. However, this number also includes rentals where no funding is available for permanent equipment provision or the final decision on funding has not been made, such as where trials are continuing.

As above, Waitematā DHB does not own the equipment so we are unable to comment on the current capital value of these items.

***What sort of items do they include?***

Equipment includes items such as crutches, walking frames, bath boards, shower stools, toilet frames, stump gutter supports, hospital beds/mattresses, wheelchairs, suction machines, nebulisers and customised ramps.

***What item is most commonly un-returned?***

The most common items that are not returned are low-cost items such as shower stools and bath boards.

***What is the most expensive piece of equipment which is currently overdue? How much is it worth?***

The most expensive item currently rented that is overdue is a (Schon premium 9) mattress that we estimate would have cost the provider somewhere in the region of \$4,000.

***How can someone return items they are no longer using? Would people face a penalty when returning overdue items?***

Patients can return items they are no longer using and they do not face any penalty when returning overdue items. Information is left with the patient when the equipment is delivered to the patient's home so that the patient is able to contact the equipment provider when no longer needed. All equipment supplied to patients is marked with the provider's contact details. Patients are also supplied with information by the therapist who orders the equipment advising how to return equipment, who to contact and the expected length of rental.

I trust that this information meets your requirements. Waitematā 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**  
**Waitematā District Health Board**