



Hospital Services

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

9 July 2018



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – non-resident births

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 25 June 2018 seeking the following of Waitemata District Health Board (DHB):

1. *“How many non-resident women gave birth in hospitals run by the DHB in the past five years. Please break down numbers by year and hospital.*
2. *Were any non-residents billed by the DHB for the births? If so how many?*
3. *Of those who were billed, how many paid the bill and what was the total each year?*
4. *What was the cost of the most inexpensive and expensive non-resident births for the DHB in the past five years, and were those bills paid?*
5. *Did the DHB sue any of the non-residents for non-payment? If so what was the total sued for each year? Were any cases won and the money paid back?*
6. *What was the legal cost to the DHB of pursuing those birth costs?*
7. *Has the DHB experienced “birth tourists” as other countries do, whereby non-residents give birth in a NZ hospital in an effort to claim residency/citizenship? (Please elaborate)*
8. *Has the DHB ever turned away any expectant mothers because they were non-residents?*
9. *Have any non-residents used fake passports or identification to achieve a free birth?*
10. *Does the DHB run any fraud-type campaigns/hotlines to try and stamp out non-residency birth non-payments/frauds?”*

Before responding to your questions, please note that Waitemata DHB cares for the largest patient population of any DHB in New Zealand, currently standing at around 630,000 people. Our DHB is involved in the birth of around 7000 babies each year and the number of births by non-resident women is very low in the overall context of the maternity care we provide. The level of debt owed by mothers not eligible for free healthcare in New Zealand is, therefore, very low in the context of the DHB’s \$1.6 billion annual operating budget.

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

Please note, the data source for the response to question 1 to 4 is our invoicing activity for non-eligible patients. The numbers provided relate to birth events and not individual patients, meaning a non-eligible woman might have had several birthing events over the years. Invoices are manually generated and the time period is taken from the time the invoices were raised. As we do not record the individual hospital location on our invoice, we are unable to provide this detail in our response. Prices quoted are inclusive of GST.

1. *How many non-resident women gave birth in hospitals run by the DHB in the past five years. Please break down numbers by year and hospital.*

Waitemata DHB has identified and invoiced 395 cases of deliveries for non-resident women. During this period, our DHB has been involved in the births of around 35,000 babies. Below is a breakdown by calendar year. This includes invoices to non-eligible women whose pregnancy, however, was ultimately covered due to their partners' eligibility status. Those 141 cases were consequently credited.

Total non-eligible women giving birth at Waitemata DHB.

Calendar Year	Maternity cases
2013	71
2014	64
2015	73
2016	78
2017	76
2018 to date	33

2. *Were any non-residents billed by the DHB for the births? If so how many?*

Over the last five years, a total of 254 non-eligible women were ultimately billed for their births at Waitemata DHB facilities.

Calendar Year	Maternity cases
2013	48
2014	49
2015	42
2016	40
2017	52
2018 to date	23

3. *Of those who were billed, how many paid the bill and what was the total each year?*

Of those 254 births, by non-resident women, a total of 102 maternity cases have been paid in full.

Calendar Year	Maternity cases	Paid
2013	15	\$146,407
2014	23	\$201,760
2015	18	\$175,087
2016	17	\$146,021
2017	21	\$213,141
2018 to date	8	\$66,453

Of those 254 births, non-resident women have made partial payments in a further 32 maternity cases.

Calendar Year	Maternity cases	Orig Billing Amount	Paid	Balance outstanding
2013	1	\$13,655	\$7,179	\$6,476
2014	1	\$13,655	\$6,189	\$7,466
2015	7	\$72,912	\$42,718	\$30,194
2016	8	\$85,564	\$43,208	\$42,356
2017	13	\$145,732	\$44,898	\$100,834
2018 to date	2	\$23,892	\$1,455	\$22,437

4. *What was the cost of the most inexpensive and expensive non-resident births for the DHB in the past five years, and were those bills paid?*

The cost of the most inexpensive birth was \$5,709.24. This is our standard price for a normal delivery. Nineteen deliveries were priced at that rate and 10 of those cases were fully paid. The cost of the most expensive delivery with complications was \$24,287.75, which was not paid.

5. *Did the DHB sue any of the non-residents for non-payment? If so, what was the total sued for each year? Were any cases won and the money paid back?*

Waitemata DHB has not issued court proceedings against non-residents for non-payment of healthcare costs as this is unlikely to be cost-effective given the amounts involved. Instead, the DHB prefers to work with women and their families to enter into repayment plans.

6. *What was the legal cost to the DHB of pursuing those birth costs?*

No legal costs have been incurred as Waitemata DHB has not issued court proceedings.

7. *Has the DHB experienced "birth tourists" as other countries do, whereby non-residents give birth in a NZ hospital in an effort to claim residency/citizenship? (Please elaborate)*

Waitemata DHB is not aware of any women who are giving birth in hospital with the intention of gaining residency or citizenship.

8. *Has the DHB ever turned away any expectant mothers because they were non-residents?*

Waitemata DHB clinical staff will always attend to pregnant women who present for care. Women who are not eligible for funded maternity care are advised that there is a cost and are referred to the Waitemata DHB eligibility team.

9. *Have any non-residents used fake passports or identification to achieve a free birth?*

We are only aware of one incident some years ago.

10. *Does the DHB run any fraud-type campaigns/hotlines to try and stamp out non-residency birth non-payments/frauds?"*

Waitemata DHB does not run any specific fraud type campaigns/hotlines.

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



Cath Cronin
Director Hospital Services
Waitemata District Health Board