



West Coast District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

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7 April 2021

9(2)(a)

RE Official information Act request WCDHB 9530

I refer to your email dated 9 March 2021 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from West Coast DHB. Specifically:

1. How many births have occurred at Westport's Kawatiri Birthing Unit, each month, over the past five years?

The number of births at Kawatiri birthing unit at Westport, month by month over the last five years, has been as follows:

| Calendar Year | Births at Kawatiri | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
| 2016 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 23 |
| 2017 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 21 |
| 2018 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 25 |
| 2019 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 17 |
| 2020 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| 2021 | 1 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |

2. How many Buller women have given birth at Greymouth Hospital, each month, over the past five years?

The number of Buller-domiciled women giving birth at Grey Hospital, month by month over the last five years, has been as follows:

| Calendar Year | Buller-domiciled births events at Grey Hospital | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
| 2016 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 41 |
| 2017 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 32 |
| 2018 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 33 |
| 2019 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 36 |
| 2020 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 40 |
| 2021 | 2 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 6 |

3. How many Buller women have given birth outside the district, each month, over the past five years?

Please refer to **Table** (overleaf) for the number of Buller-domiciled women giving birth at public hospitals in other DHB districts around the country, month by month over the last five years, has been as follows:

| Calendar Year | Buller-domiciled births events at Public Hospitals off the West Coast | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | TOTAL |
| 2016 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 22 |
| 2017 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 16 |
| 2018 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 14 |
| 2019 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| 2020 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| 2021 | 0 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |

This data includes Buller-domiciled birth events at tertiary level hospital centres where women may have been pre-directed or transferred, due to high risk of their pregnancies and/or potential complications arising to delivery of their babies or to themselves. We note that the data source for this information above likely excludes data from deliveries for any Buller women that may have occurred at private hospitals.

4. How many Buller women have had home births, each month, over the last five years?

We do not hold information on the number of Buller-domiciled women that have had home births over the past five years. We therefore decline a response to this question pursuant to Section 18(g) of the Official Information Act i.e. “... that the information requested is not held by the West Coast DHB”.

This information may be held by the Ministry of Health as the employers of independent midwives who provide these services. They may be able to assist you in this regard.

5. Is the WCDHB concerned at the trend for fewer Buller women to be birthing at Kawatiri and more Buller women birthing in Greymouth?

Overall birthing numbers on the West Coast have been decreasing over the last few years. This trend has also impacted on Kawatiri birthing numbers.

We are committed to ensuring that women have this option available to them in Westport but ultimately it is the women’s decision as to where they birth. We did note the decrease in birthing numbers at Kawatiri over recent years, combined with an increase in women birthing at Te Nikau, who live in Buller. We have proactively tried to determine the reasons. This is covered in our response to Question 6.

6. What does the WCDHB believe has prompted the trend?

When we identified the decrease in birthing numbers at Kawatiri, we contacted the women who lived in Buller but chose to birth at the Te Nikau Maternity unit to determine their rationale for the decision. We spoke to 20 Buller women (who birthed at Grey facilities) during the period between December 2019 and November 2020. Their responses for birthing at Grey were as follows:

| Reason Birthed Grey | Count |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Buller LMC had full caseload | 1 |
| Clinical reasons | 6 |
| Level of Support available in Grey | 13 |
| Grand Total | 20 |

The women who indicated that they chose Grey due to the level of support available advised that should something go wrong they would already be in Grey and had mitigated the need for transfer. They wanted the additional level of security that birthing in a Secondary level unit provided.

7. Does the WCDHB have any plans to encourage more women to birth at Kawatiri - if so what are they?

Ultimately the decision about place of intended birth is the mother’s decision, in consultation with her maternity carer. As part of the Maternity Quality Safety Programme, DHBs are encouraged to increase numbers of births in primary care units, where it is safe to do so – Kawatiri is a primary care unit.

8. How many births does Kawatiri require a month to remain viable?

There is no predetermined number of births required at Kawatiri to ensure the unit remains viable. We are ensuring that Buller women have the option to birth within their community and close to home.

9. Is closure of Kawatiri a possibility?

The West Coast DHB continues to provide Buller women with a birthing option in Westport and provide care closer to home. Our current maternity project: "Growing up Well on the West Coast" is exploring what it takes to grow healthy babies/pēpi and whānau on the West Coast and we will be engaging with the Buller community as part of this project. We are looking forward to hearing from our Buller women/wāhine and whānau to find out what that looks like for them.

10. What are the rules governing which mothers can give birth at Kawatiri (ie low risk etc)?

We provide women with all the relevant information required to enable them to make informed decisions about the intended place of birth for their baby. However, if a women's clinical picture indicates that they should birth in a secondary or tertiary facility, then we would be recommending this with place of birth being either Te Nikau (secondary level of care) or Christchurch Womens Hospital (tertiary level of care).

I trust this satisfies your interest in this matter.

You may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek a review of our decision to withhold information by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz; or Freephone 0800 802 602

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the West Coast DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Ralph La Salle
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Planning, Funding & Decision Support