



# *West Coast District Health Board*

## *Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini*

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12 May 2021

9(2)(a)

### **RE Official Information Act request WCDHB 9541**

I refer to your email dated 13 April 2021 requesting information from West Coast DHB on inter-hospital transfer by air under the Official Information Act.

#### **Caveat to data:**

Funding of air ambulance services is split between the Ministry of Health (the "Ministry"), the Accident Compensation Corporation ("ACC") and DHBs. The data we are able to provide you in response to your questions relates only to those inter-hospital air transfer services that have been paid for by West Coast DHB.

The National Ambulance Sector Office ("NASO") is a business unit within the Ministry. It is funded and governed by the Ministry and ACC. NASO manages:

- primary retrieval for emergency accident or medical-related missions for eligible people; and
- Inter-Hospital Transfer ("IHT") missions **within** 24 hours for accident-related or three hours for medical-related missions.
- DHBs fund IHT missions **after** 24 hours for accident related or three hours for medical related missions and other types of IHT services.

We do not hold data for the questions you have asked in regard to inter-hospital air transfer services funded through other agency arrangements. We therefore decline to provide additional information that may relate to your request under Section 18(g) of the Official Information Act i.e. "... *that the information requested is not held*" by the West Coast DHB.

This caveat noted, please find below our responses in regard to your specific questions in this matter:

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

None.

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

Not applicable, we do not employ any nurses in this role.

**3. For each of the last 3 complete financial years, how many flight hours have been charged to the DHB for interhospital transfers by fixed wing aircraft? (Figures in decimal hours)**

According to our available records, fixed wing IHT flight hours charged to West Coast DHB over the last three complete financial years are as follows:

- 2017/18 No data recorded
- 2018/19 125.33
- 2019/20 152.77

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

According to our available records, rotary wing IHT flight hours charged to West Coast DHB over the last three complete financial years are as follows:

- 2017/18 No data recorded
- 2018/19 83.50
- 2019/20 103

**5. For each of the last 3 complete financial years, how much has the DHB spent with third parties for interhospital transfers by fixed wing aircraft?**

According to our records West Coast DHB has spent the below over the last three complete financial years with third parties:

- 2017/18 \$627,622.00
- 2018/19 \$648,796.50
- 2019/20 \$802,207.87
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**6. For each of the last 3 complete financial years, how much has the DHB spent with third parties for interhospital transfers by rotary wing aircraft?**

According to our records West Coast DHB has spent the below over the last three complete financial years with third parties:

- 2017/18 \$323,283.31
- 2018/19 \$486,774.00
- 2019/20 \$624,283.00

**7. For each of the last 3 complete financial years, what is the total number of flights for each destination for interhospital transfers for fixed wing aircraft?**

According to our records, West Coast DHB has paid for the following number of inter-hospital fixed wing inter-hospital transfer flights for residents from our district over the last three financial years:

- 2017/18 169
- 2018/19 165
- 2019/20 189

A summary of the origin and destinations of these flights is listed below in tables in **Appendix 1**.

**8. For each of the last 3 complete financial years, what is the total number of flights for each destination for interhospital transfers for rotary wing aircraft?**

According to our records, West Coast DHB has paid for the following number of inter-hospital rotary wing inter-hospital transfer flights for residents from our district over the last three financial years:

- 2017/18 68
- 2018/19 75
- 2019/20 62

A summary of the origin and destinations of these flights is listed in tables in **Appendix 1** (attached).

**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?**

West Coast DHB itself does not apply any specific service performance measurement to service providers providing IHT services by fixed wing aircraft. Operational safety and maintenance schedule requirement metrics for the various fixed-wing aircraft types used for providing such services are governed by the Civil Aviation Authority.

**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?**

West Coast DHB itself does not apply any specific service performance measurement to service providers providing IHT services by rotary wing aircraft. Operational safety and maintenance schedule requirement metrics for the various helicopter aircraft types providing such services are governed by the Civil Aviation Authority.

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

West Coast DHB pays the costs of air ambulance transfers by fixed wing aircraft as invoiced to us by other DHBs in respect of those patients who are residents of our district. While not overly common, cost-sharing between DHBs at single event level may occur from time to time by mutual agreement on a case by case basis, dependent on the particular circumstances relating to the individual patient.

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

The process is invoice based, where NASO has determined the hourly rate and invoices DHBs for IHT hours flown. This was first established through a variation to the Crown Funding Agreement.

DHBs are responsible for funding IHTs, however there are two business rules for when IHTs are funded by either the Ministry or ACC.

- The Ministry will pay for an urgent IHT where a patient is transferred from one medical facility to another within three hours of arriving at the first facility. The exception to this rule is the northern region.
- ACC will pay for an urgent IHT when a patient is transferred from one publicly funded hospital to another within 24 hours of arriving at the first hospital, as long as that first hospital could not be reasonably expected to meet patient needs (e.g. if a service is usually available at that facility, but at that particular time due to staff absence was not).

For each calendar month, DHBs are sent a list of IHT missions where the patients have been domiciled to that DHB. These missions exclude all missions where the provider indicates the mission is an ACC 24 hour rule IHT.

The DHB reviews the missions sent and advises if they accept the cost of the IHT or whether the cost of the IHT should be elsewhere, i.e. Ministry of Health for 3 hour rule missions or another DHB.

Missions advised that fall under the three-hour rule are checked with St John and those that are found to fall outside the rule are re-sent to DHBs. Additionally, missions that should be sent to another DHB are also sent.

DHBs are invoiced for all accepted missions for each quarter.

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

Nil.

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

As an acute service, growth forecasts for budget setting purposes are based on expenditure in prior years.

**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?**

West Coast has a current contract with Garden City Helicopters as its primary provider to provide the bulk of our inter-hospital transfers by twin-engine fixed wing aircraft that occur between the West Coast and other main centres. This contract is due to expire on 30 September 2022. Renewal is by mutual negotiation. Other inter-hospital air transfer providers invoice for services on a per flight basis.

As advised in our letter of 29 April 2021, under section 14(b)(ii) of the Official Information Act (1982), we have partially transferred Question 15 of this request, in regard to inter-hospital transfer by rotary aircraft, as the Ministry of Health/National Ambulance Sector Office (NASO) holds the contracts for DHB rotary services.

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](http://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  
**Acting Executive Director**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**



**APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF THE ORIGIN AND DESTINATION OF INTER-HOSPITAL TRANSFERS BY AIR FLIGHTS PAID FOR BY WEST COAST DHB IN THE FINAINCIAL YEARS 2017-18 TO 2019-20.**

**QUESTION 7: Inter-hospital transfers by fixed wing aircraft paid for by West Coast DHB, by point of origin and destination**

2017-18	Transfer From	Destination				Total
		Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Westport	
	Christchurch			18		18
	Dunedin			1		1
	Greymouth	139				139
	Nelson	2				2
	Westport	8				8
	Whakatane			1		1

2018-19	Transfer From	Destination						Total
		Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Nelson	Wellington	Westport	
	Auckland	1		1				2
	Christchurch			13				13
	Dunedin			2				2
	Greymouth	126	1		3	2		132
	Nelson	1		2			2	5
	Wellington	2						2
	Westport	8			1			9

2019-20	Transfer From	Destination							Total
		Auckland	Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Nelson	Wellington	Westport	
	Auckland		1						1
	Christchurch	1		1	14	1	1		18
	Dunedin		1		1				2
	Greymouth		149	1			1		151
	Invercargill				1				1
	Nelson		2					1	3
	Wellington		1		1				2
	Westport		10					1	11

**QUESTION 8: Inter-hospital transfers by rotary wing aircraft paid for by West Coast DHB, by point of origin and destination**

2017-18	Transfer From	Destination				Total
		Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Westport	
	Christchurch				1	1
	Dunedin	1				1
	Greymouth	8	1		1	10
	Tauranga			1		1
	Wellington			1		1
	Westport	11		43		54

2018-19	Transfer From	Destination					Total
		Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Nelson	Westport	
	Greymouth	9	1			2	12
	Westport	5		57	1		63

2019-20	Transfer From	Destination				Total
		Christchurch	Dunedin	Greymouth	Nelson	
	Greymouth	20	1		1	22
	Oamaru		1			1
	Westport	7		28	4	39