



3 September 2021



Response to a request for official information



Thank you for your request for official information received 13 April 2021 by Nelson Marlborough Health (NMH)¹, followed by the necessary extension of time 12 May 2021 and notice of decision 10 June 2021, where you seek the following information.

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

NMH response: Eight.

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

NMH response: \$82,000.

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?*

NMH response: We pay a fixed rate per trip however do not record the number of flight hours charged for Fixed Wing aircraft, and flight hours data is not specified on invoices. As such, we refuse this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act in 'that the information requested is not held by the department or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is either (i) held by another department or organisation; or (ii) connected more closely with the functions of another department or organisation'.

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?*

NMH response: Please see Table One.

TABLE ONE

Financial Year	Flight hours charged – Rotary Wing
2017/18	18
2018/19	13
2019/20	14

¹ Nelson Marlborough District Health Board

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?*

NMH response: Please see Table Two.

TABLE TWO

Financial Year	Spend with Third parties – Fixed Wing
2017/18	\$2,548,453
2018/19	\$3,005,074
2019/20	\$3,067,862

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?*

NMH response: Please see Table Three.

TABLE THREE

Financial Year	Spend with Third parties – Rotary Wing
2017/18	\$52,680
2018/19	\$35,684
2019/20	\$39,124

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?*

NMH response: Please see Table Four.

TABLE FOUR

Financial Year	Number of Flights – Fixed Wing
2017/18	944
2018/19	1,056
2019/20	702

We do not collect destination data for Fixed Wing aircraft in a manner that will enable us to extract it from our Information System or reports. As such, we refuse this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act in *‘that the information requested is not held by the department or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is either (i) held by another department or organisation; or (ii) connected more closely with the functions of another department or organisation’.*

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?*

NMH response: Please see Table Five.

TABLE FIVE

Financial Year	Number of Flights – Rotary Wing
2017/18	12
2018/19	17
2019/20	23

We do not collect destination data for Rotary Wing aircraft in a manner that will enable us to extract it from our Information System or reports. As such, we refuse this part of your request

under section 18(g) of the Act in *'that the information requested is not held by the department or organisation and the person dealing with the request has no grounds for believing that the information is either (i) held by another department or organisation; or (ii) connected more closely with the functions of another department or organisation'*.

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?*

NMH response: We do not apply any specific service performance measurement to service providers providing Inter Hospital Transfer (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 (CAA).

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?*

NMH response: We do 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 CAA.

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

NMH response: We pay 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 the Nelson Marlborough district.

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

NMH response: The process is invoice based, where the National Ambulance Sector Office (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 (eg if a service is usually available at that facility, but at that particular time was not due to staff absence).

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 resent 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?

NMH response: We have no record of having provided advice relating to patient transfers by aircraft toward the Simpson Review.

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

NMH response: As this is an acute service, growth forecasts for budget setting purposes are based on expenditure in previous 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?

NMH response: We have a current contract for IHT by Fixed Wing aircraft with Garden City Helicopters. This contract initial expiry date was 31 March 2018. Renewals are biannually until 2028.

As advised in our email on 28 April 2021, the IHT by Rotary aircraft aspect was partially transferred to the Ministry of Health, under section 14(b)(ii) on 28 April 2021, for a Ministry response.

This response has been provided under the Official Information Act 1982. You have the right to seek an investigation by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or free phone 0800 802 602.

If you have any questions about this decision please feel free to email our OIA Coordinator OIArequest@nmdhb.govt.nz I trust that this information meets your requirements. NMH, 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.

Yours sincerely



Lexie O'Shea
Chief Executive