



# West Coast District Health Board

## Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

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12 June 2018

[REDACTED]

### RE Official Information Act request WCDHB 9130

I refer to your email dated 26 April 2018 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from West Coast DHB.

- 1. How much does your DHB spend annually on transporting patients on medical flights (by this I mean either fixed wing or helicopters that are specifically for this purpose, as opposed to scheduled passenger services)?**

According to our records West Coast DHB spent \$1,156,568 on its helicopter and fixed-wing air ambulance transfers in 2016-17 financial year.

Please note that the funding of air ambulance services is split between the Ministry of Health (the "Ministry"), the Accident Compensation Corporation ("ACC") and DHBs.

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.

- 2. What was this figure 5 years ago?**

Our records show that West Coast DHB spent \$983,050 on its helicopter and fixed-wing air ambulance transfers in 2011-12 financial year

- 3. What airlines provide this service for you?**

Most services for air ambulance transfers – both fixed wing and helicopter – are provided for West Coast DHB by Garden City Helicopters, who operate from their main office in Christchurch but who also station and operate a rescue helicopter based in Greymouth, immediately adjacent to Grey Base Hospital. Air ambulance transfers of patients have occasionally also been provided by the Life Flight Trust, Skyline Aviation, and once by Otago Rescue Helicopter. These are undertaken on a case by case basis as may be required.

**4. How many patients a year are transported by these specialist medi-vac services? What was this figure 5 years ago?**

Our records indicate that the number of transports of patients by air ambulance flights via helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft between our hospitals and those in other DHB centres was 273 in the 2016/17 financial year (338 in the calendar year 2017).

Data for 2012 and prior periods is not complete, as mission data collected at this period was related to inpatient transfers to other DHBs only. We do not hold full and complete data about all transfer missions and transport modes prior to this period. We are therefore declining to provide this information under Section 18 (e) on the basis that the information requested does not exist.

**5. How many of these are emergency cases?**

Air ambulance transports by fixed wing pressurised aircraft or helicopter for emergency and urgent cases from our DHB hospital facilities numbered 180 in the 2016/17 financial year (230 in 2017 calendar year). As noted in our answer to question 4 above, mission data for 2012 and prior years is incomplete, so comparable information for the earlier period is not available.

**6. How many are patient transfers?**

Non-urgent air ambulance inter-hospital transport cases by fixed wing pressurised aircraft or helicopter from our DHB hospital facilities numbered 93 in the 2016/17 financial year (108 in 2017 calendar year). As noted in our answer to question 4 above, mission data for 2012 and prior years is incomplete, so comparable information for the earlier period is not available..

**7. How many are for organ transport e.g. kidney / heart/ liver/ lung for transplants?**

There were no organ transport cases from our DHB hospital facilities during the two comparative years you have requested information for.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

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

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Gullery  
**Executive Director**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**