

2 July 2021

OIA Reference: OIA2021060201

Richard James

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Tēnā koe Richard James

**Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) – Response – OIA2021060201**

Thank you for your official information request regarding *Effect of Wellington Airport closures on aeromedical services* received by Capital & Coast District Health Board (CCDHB) on 1 June 2021. You requested the following information:

*Please could you provide all information you may have regarding the effects on aeromedical transfer of patients caused by Wellington Airport's night-time runway closures during 2020-2021*

*Particularly:*

- 1. The number of patients affected (who could not be transferred, were taken to other airports, or transfer was delayed) & assessment of any harm caused to them*
- 2. Any assessment of the financial cost to Capital & Coast DHB's aeromedical services caused by Wellington Airport runway closures.*

On 6 June 2021 you clarified your request to: *Could I please narrow the OIA request to provide only the information contained within the first bullet point, namely:*

- 1. The number of patients affected (who could not be transferred, were taken to other airports, or transfer was delayed) & assessment of any harm caused to them.*

Our response to your request is as follows.

**Response**

- 1. The number of patients affected (who could not be transferred, were taken to other airports, or transfer was delayed) & assessment of any harm caused to them.*

Fifty-four in total of patients referred to the aeromedical retrieval service were affected of whom we deemed 40 had delay in accessing definitive care. The remaining 14 were affected but treatment was not definitively delayed because we used other methods of retrieval (e.g. helicopter instead of fixed wing). The use of the helicopter would greatly increase the cost of the transfer and the risk to the patient/crew (flying in the helicopter is riskier than the fixed wing) but the patient transfer was not delayed. The helicopter was not affected by the airport closure because it does not need a runway.

We assessed all patients we retrieved during the overnight closures and determined seven had likely incurred harm; these were duly reported as Severity Assessment Codes (SAC<sup>1</sup>) events. For those referred on, we have no information, as we were unable to retrieve them to Wellington so do not know their outcome.

I trust this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the OIA, to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or you can free phone 0800 802 602.

Nāku ite noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fionnagh Dougan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'D' at the end.

**Fionnagh Dougan**

Āpiha Whakahaere Mātāmua | Chief Executive

Ūpoko ki te uru Hauora | Capital & Coast and Hutt Valley District Health Boards

<sup>1</sup>Note: [https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Reportable-Events/Publications/National\\_Adverse\\_Events\\_Policy\\_2017/SAC-examples-table-2019-20.pdf](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Reportable-Events/Publications/National_Adverse_Events_Policy_2017/SAC-examples-table-2019-20.pdf)