



8 October 2021

Matthew Hooton

By emails: fyi-request-16398-8b9a13ca@requests.fyi.org.nz
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Ref: OIA-2021/22-0115
OIA-2021/22-0128

Dear Matthew Hooton

Official Information Act request relating to Intensive Care Unit beds

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 13 August 2021. You requested:

“information held by DPMC on how many ICU beds there were in New Zealand on 1 January 2020, how many there were on 1 July 2021, how many there were on 1 August 2021, and what steps DPMC took to help achieve the assumed improvement in these numbers to make New Zealand able to cater for more people requiring ICU care.”

On 14 August 2021, you clarified this request noting:

Please note that by "beds" I mean this term in two senses, namely:

- 1) the actual bed and the supporting equipment to provide ICU care; and*
- 2) the number of "beds" being used or immediately available for use in New Zealand by people needing ICU services, taking into account available staffing.*

On 18 August 2021, you also requested:

“Please provide information held by DPMC on how many people the New Zealand health system (public and private) was capable of providing ICU care for at or around 6pm on Tuesday 17 August 2021, and how many patients were being provided with such care (public and private) at that time.”

You followed up your request on the same day with:

“Also as part of this request, please provide all advice provided on Tuesday 17 August to the Government about ICU care.”

On 19 August 2021, we responded to your request of 18 August 2021, advising you that the information requested is more closely connected to the functions of the Ministry of Health, and we would have transferred, however, we understood you had made the same or a similar request to the Ministry already.

And on 19 August 2021 you responded advising:

“Thank you for your letter. I have made a similar request to the Ministry of Health. However, DPMC is the lead advisor to the Prime Minister and Cabinet and playing a lead role in New Zealand's Covid response, and I am interested in what information DPMC holds and what advice it gave. Not all the information covered by my request will be held by the Ministry of Health which is why I have made this request to DPMC as well.”

On 10 September 2021, we extended your request as additional consultation were required before a response could be provided. I am now in a position to respond.

I understand you were advised by the Ministry of Health Daily ICU reporting from DHBs restarted on 21 August 2021, showing that there were 393 ICU capable beds in public hospitals in New Zealand. Since then, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) has received daily situation updates from the Ministry of Health advising of ICU bed availability. You may also be aware that the Ministry has also published details on ICU bed capacity to its website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/covid-19-advice-all-health-professionals#icu-bed>

As you have specifically requested what is held by DPMC, we have reviewed our records and consulted relevant staff to identify what was held on the dates you have indicated. We have not identified ICU bed availability for the dates specified. However, I can advise prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in New Zealand, we had received figures indicating 239 ICU and HDU beds were available, in late February 2020. By October 2020, this figure had increased to 324 beds. If you have questions about these figures, I encourage you to raise them with the Ministry of Health, as the responsible agency.

In making my decision, I have taken the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Act into account.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Barnes
Deputy Chief Executive, COVID-19 Response