

28 July 2014

Mr Shane Murdoch  
[fyi-request-1774-e49dee0a@requests.fyi.org](mailto:fyi-request-1774-e49dee0a@requests.fyi.org)

Dear Mr Murdoch

### Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 1 July 2014, asking for the following information under the Official Information Act 1982:

1. How many children were injured by falls from top bunks in the period 2008-2013?
2. In how many of those incidents did the top bunk have a guard rail attached?
3. What types of injuries were sustained in those falls?
4. What was the range of ages of the children involved? Could you please provide proportions or numbers of children in each age group?

From our phone conversation of 8 July 2014, I understand that you are seeking this information as part of an investigation into whether bunk beds are safe to use in the Cholmondeley Children's Centre, currently being rebuilt in Christchurch.

Unfortunately, due to the limitations of the data that the Corporation collects it has not been able to locate the information you seek. The information you have requested is more specific than the general data that ACC records to meet its statutory functions. This decision complies with section 18(e) of the Act.

I will now explain why ACC is limited in the type of information it can collect and hold, and the effect this has on being able to locate very specific information, such as you have requested.

#### Quality and reliability of ACC data

The accuracy of the data ACC collects about accidents, and the individuals injured in them, is largely reliant on the information claimants provide when they complete an ACC45 Claim Form. In its current form the ACC45 is an electronic form.

There are a variety of fields that are able to be completed when filling out the ACC45 Form, some mandatory, some not. For example, it is mandatory for a claimant to indicate when their accident occurred, whether the accident occurred at work, and what they were doing prior to the accident. Those fields are completed by using drop down boxes which list the relevant objects for each. However, those lists are reasonably discrete.

The ACC45 also contains a drop down box titled "Accident Cause", completion of which is optional. That field includes the following:

- Ascending/Descending

- Carrying
- Lifting/lowering/loading/unloading
- Recreation/sporting activity
- Walking, running

Although the accident cause field is optional, ACC may still be able to locate relevant data where a claimant has provided a description of how their injury happened in the free text field, also located on the form. The free text field on the ACC45 Form enables claimants to provide a brief description of how their accident happened, such as “fell off bunk beds”. Significantly, it is also not mandatory to complete this free text field and not every claimant does so.

The reason ACC does not require information about accident cause from claimants is that the ACC Scheme operates on a no fault basis. Cover is available by virtue of a person simply having suffered a personal injury and is not determined by how that injury occurred. Therefore, while that information does have an inherent value in informing our understanding of how and why injuries occur, strictly speaking, ACC cannot request it for the purpose of processing claims under the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

It is also important to note that even where claimants offer a description of how their injury occurred there is a large degree of variability in the nature and quality of the descriptions they provide. Such inconsistency can make it difficult to search for a particular item or issue with any degree of accuracy. Nonetheless, an analyst would be able to perform an electronic free text search by applying a filter that could look for the words “bunk bed/s”. However, from that search ACC cannot identify what proportion of data is missing as a result of claimants who have opted to leave the free text field blank, or who have not used the words bunk bed/s.

Free text searches are a useful tool for identifying trends when the search yields a large number of results. However, this type of search is less suited to searching for very specific issues and terms, such as falls from bunk beds. This is due to, as I have already discussed, the variation in the quality of the information entered in the free text field on ACC45 forms, and because a significant proportion of clients do not complete that field.

### **We are happy to answer your questions**

Please call me at [Stephanie.Lewis@acc.co.nz](mailto:Stephanie.Lewis@acc.co.nz) if you would like to talk about the information we've provided. I will be happy to answer any questions or, if you have any concerns, work with you to resolve these.

If you are still not happy, you may make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. You can call them on 0800 802 602, 9am to 5pm weekdays, or write to:

The Office of the Ombudsman  
P O Box 10 152  
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Stephanie Lewis  
**Advisor, Government Services**