

4 December 2024

Rodney Parsons

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Tēnā koe Rodney

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00070972

Thank you for your email transferred from the Office of Hon Dr. Shane Reti to Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) on 12 November 2024. You asked for following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Ambulance Emergency Medical Dispatch centres in New Zealand:

- *do not [have] the ability to locate people by GPS or by their call triangulation, which is the standard internationally*
- *have large gaps in the computer dispatch system maps, meaning large areas of New Zealand aren't covered by ambulance services*
- *do not have automated dispatch, unlike other countries such as the UK and Australia*
- *have significant safety issues related to under-funding by government, such as poor response times*

These all appear to relate to successive under-funding by governments over many years, to the extent that there is an excess mortality rate associated with Emergency Medical Dispatch in New Zealand.

Provide all reports related to these issues, including the government's plans to address these issues, and what funding has been allocated to address the geolocation, mapping, automated dispatch and dispatch safety issues.

Response

For ease of response, I will respond to each of your points in turn.

Ambulance Emergency Medical Dispatch centres in New Zealand:

- *do not [have] the ability to locate people by GPS or by their call triangulation, which is the standard internationally*

The Ambulance Team (based in Health NZ and jointly funded by Health NZ and ACC), Hato Hone St John (HHStJ), and Wellington Free Ambulance (WFA) worked with the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment and other stakeholders on the Emergency Caller Location Information (ECLI) service that was introduced to New Zealand in May 2017.

This offered high-precision location information for smartphones running Google's Android system – approximately 70% of the New Zealand market – and lower-precision location information for most other mobile devices. The high-precision location solution was extended to mobile phones running Apple's iOS operating system in April 2018. More information can be found here:

www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/it-communications-and-broadband/our-role-in-the-ict-sector/emergency-call-services/emergency-caller-location-information.

Ambulance Emergency Medical Dispatch centres in New Zealand:

- *have large gaps in the computer dispatch system maps, meaning large areas of New Zealand aren't covered by ambulance services*

Regarding your statement above, we note that:

- Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) affords mapping coverage across all of New Zealand (including shoreline and islands). Providers use up-to-date mapping that is appropriate to the ambulances being dispatched, including for both road and air assets.
- The CAD system is regularly upgraded as new versions are released, including regarding mapping changes. There are also protocols for managing when the mapping system does not have an address to ensure patients can be located without significant delay.
- New Zealand's Emergency Ambulance Communications Centres (in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) regularly review the map coverage and ensure new roads or subdivisions are added and road closures are noted in the system to ensure that any need for alternative deployment and routing is actively managed.
- The Air Desk (specialist for Helicopter dispatch) has additional mapping systems to locate patients using GPS coordinates who may not be at a street address and coordinate with other emergency services such as the Police and Rescue Coordination Centre when needed.

Ambulance Emergency Medical Dispatch centres in New Zealand:

- *do not have automated dispatch, unlike other countries such as the UK and Australia*

We note that in New Zealand:

- Dispatch jurisdictions utilise a 'recommend' or 'initial assign' function that considers GPS locations of scenes and ambulance resources (road and air) to recommended dispatch, based on skill level and time to scene.
- The Emergency Ambulance Communications Centres have protocols that mandate/describe the number and type of resources that should be dispatched to various types of incidents (e.g., PRIME and Critical Care Paramedic dispatch).
- The Air Desk uses various tools, including machine learning, to identify incidents for review that are likely to meet Emergency Air Ambulance Helicopter dispatch criteria and Standard Operating Procedures to ensure high acuity incidents are rapidly dispatched.
- The Emergency Ambulance Service providers are investigating various tools, including how machine learning may be used to improve initial triage and dispatching accuracy and timeliness.

Ambulance Emergency Medical Dispatch centres in New Zealand:

- *have significant safety issues related to under-funding by government, such as poor response times*

HHStJ recently received a funding increase of \$21 million, bringing total ACC and Health NZ (joint purchaser) funding to \$357m in the 2024/25 financial year. (The corresponding funding increase to WFA is still being confirmed). The 2024/25 funding increases comes on top of a cumulative increase of \$148m over the previous two financial years to Emergency Road Ambulance Service providers and has resulted in over 300 new front-line staff being employed since 2022.

The Ambulance Team has observed steadily improving response time performance for emergency road ambulance since 2022, which is shown in the trend figures laid out in **Appendix One**. These present national PURPLE and RED (the highest acuity triage levels) response time performance against the contractual targets for both rural and urban areas.

Provide all reports related to these issues, including the government's plans to address these issues, and what funding has been allocated to address the geolocation, mapping, automated dispatch and dispatch safety issues.

The Ambulance Team does not currently hold reports specific to the types of approaches set out in your request; instead, the team's approach is part of the broader goal of improving response times.

As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the documents alleged to contain the information requested do not exist.

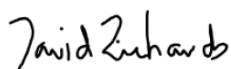
How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nz.OIA@tewhaturora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



David Richards

**Group Manager Ambulance – Living Well
Planning, Funding and Outcomes**