

Funder : Eligibility for services
Proactive Release: 01 May 2019



17 April 2019



E-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Official Information Act (1982) Request

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, which we received on transfer from the Ministry of Health under Section 14 of the Act, on 20 March 2019. You requested the following information:

With all the information broken down into year groups:

- **How many times, over the past five years, did non-residents needed emergency ambulance assistance?**
- **How much have emergency assistance ambulance trips for non-residents cost over the past five years?**
- **How much have non-urgent patient transfers of non-residents cost over the past five years?**
- **What were the top five most expensive ambulance trips for non-residents?**
- **Which districts had the most expensive ambulance costs for non-residents?**

For context, we note that CM Health and our community partners provide healthcare to the residents of Counties Manukau region, comprising an approx. population of 557,000 people, with significant ethnic and cultural diversity. We also provide regional and national specialist Burns/ Plastics and Orthopaedic/ Spinal services. These factors both affect the role of ambulance transport in providing services.

Eligibility determination for health care is complex and case-specific, and it can take some time to collect and assess the facts against the criteria. We will provide any required acute or urgent health care immediately, and in a compassionate manner. All patients requiring treatment for an acute injury or illness will be treated, regardless of their eligibility for funded services. We have an Eligibility Team who then completes the determination of entitlements procedure.

The responses for CM Health to each of your questions are provided below, noting that we also provided related information to you in mid-March, via a media query on other CM Health services volumes / costs incurred in providing health care to people ineligible for publicly funded health care in New Zealand.

This response includes invoiced amounts related to “cost of treatment for non-New Zealand citizens” provided to non-New Zealand citizens, who were not entitled [“ineligible”] to receive publicly funded healthcare under the Ministry of Health 2011 Eligibility Direction. The DHB is obligated to seek payment for these costs from the individual.

Ministry of Health 2011 Eligibility Direction is available at:

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services/guide-eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services>

The information will *not* include the costs of providing treatment to non-New Zealand citizens who are not billable under the Eligibility Direction, (for example: any costs for treatment of notifiable infectious diseases, maternity care for non-eligible person with an eligible partner, ACC cases, and for Australian or UK reciprocal health agreements etc.).

1. How many times, over the past five years, did non-residents needed emergency ambulance assistance?

CM Health does not fund the provision of any emergency ambulance services. In Auckland, these ambulance services are funded and delivered via St John’s Ambulance service who receive some of their funding directly from the Ministry of Health, ACC and/or from private contributions/donations by users to St Johns Ambulance.

We do not hold any data on how people travel to/arrive at hospital, and if those who are “ineligible” for NZ healthcare have used an emergency ambulance or travel by other means. As we do not hold this information, we are declining this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act.

2. How much have emergency assistance ambulance trips for non-residents cost over the past five years?

As for question 1 above, we do not hold information on the costs for use of emergency ambulances by any users, as this cost is not incurred or funded by CM Health. We are therefore declining your request under section 18(g) of the Act.

3. How much have non-urgent patient transfers of non-residents cost over the past five years?

The amounts invoiced to “ineligible” individuals requiring ambulance transfers are provided in Table 1:

<i>Total Invoiced (excl. GST)</i>	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	YTD 2018/19
Invoices	\$15,803	\$29,217	\$35,594	\$73,042	\$29,819

Table 1

Use of an ambulance for an inter-hospital transfer is related to cases where clinicians have deemed a patient to medically require this to travel for treatment, rather than using other transport options. While this is not an emergency, there are reasonable grounds for the services to be used to provide care.

The increase in amounts per year reflected both an increase in numbers requiring this service, and also changes in processes to ensure these costs are included into the invoices for people ineligible for publicly funded services. We note that these figures include transfers between hospitals in Counties Manukau, and across the metro-Auckland region for other treatment, and may include use of multiple trips by non-urgent transport for some patients.

For the period specified, invoices were generated for 267 individuals to recoup costs incurred by the CM Health for non-urgent ambulance charges. These totals include a range of costs for the service provided, depending on distance travelled and the time involved.

4. What were the top five most expensive ambulance trips for non-residents?

The five largest invoices generated to an “ineligible” individual for non-urgent ambulance transport costs are in table 2 noting that these were all for multiple trips provided. We are not able to isolate the cost per trip from the invoice totals.

<i>Total Invoiced (excl. GST)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Invoices	\$2,782.60	\$2,400.00	\$2,086.95	\$1,877.52	\$1,877.50
Trips	4	3	3	2	2

Table 2

5. Which districts had the most expensive ambulance costs for non-residents?

We can only provide data on these costs for the CM Health region, encompassing the Manukau, Franklin and north Waikato districts. The details above are for costs for ineligible patients admitted to our DHB facilities, for travel to other hospital facilities.

I trust this information satisfactorily answers your query. If you are not satisfied with this response you are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau DHB website.

Yours sincerely,

Fepulea’i Margie Apa
Chief Executive