

14th October 2020

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Neonatal Care Services

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 22nd September 2020, you requested the following information:

- **How many NICU beds is CMDHB funded for?**
- **What were the occupancy levels, broken down by year, over the last three years (including this year so far) - eg how many babies were in the unit and how often is the unit at or above capacity?**
- **How many women had to be sent away to give birth because of capacity issues over the last three years, including this year up to now?**
- **What are the additional costs associated with increasing cot capacity above budget - could you tell me by how much the unit went over budget over the last five years, broken down by year?**
- **How much has the CMDHB spent on sending women away to give birth over the last five years. broken down by year?**
- **Is the CMDHB expecting an increase in resourcing for its neonatal staffing in this year's budget and has this been signed off by the ministry yet? If so, by how much?**

Counties Manukau DHB Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

- **How many NICU beds is CMDHB funded for?**

Since our last response (14 March 2018) to similar questions, our Neonatal Unit is currently resourced for 34 cots. In 2018 the Unit increased its resourcing to 28 cots, then 32/33 cots in 2019 and 34 cots for 2020.

- **What were the occupancy levels, broken down by year, over the last three years (including this year so far) – e.g. how many babies were in the unit and how often is the unit at or above capacity?**

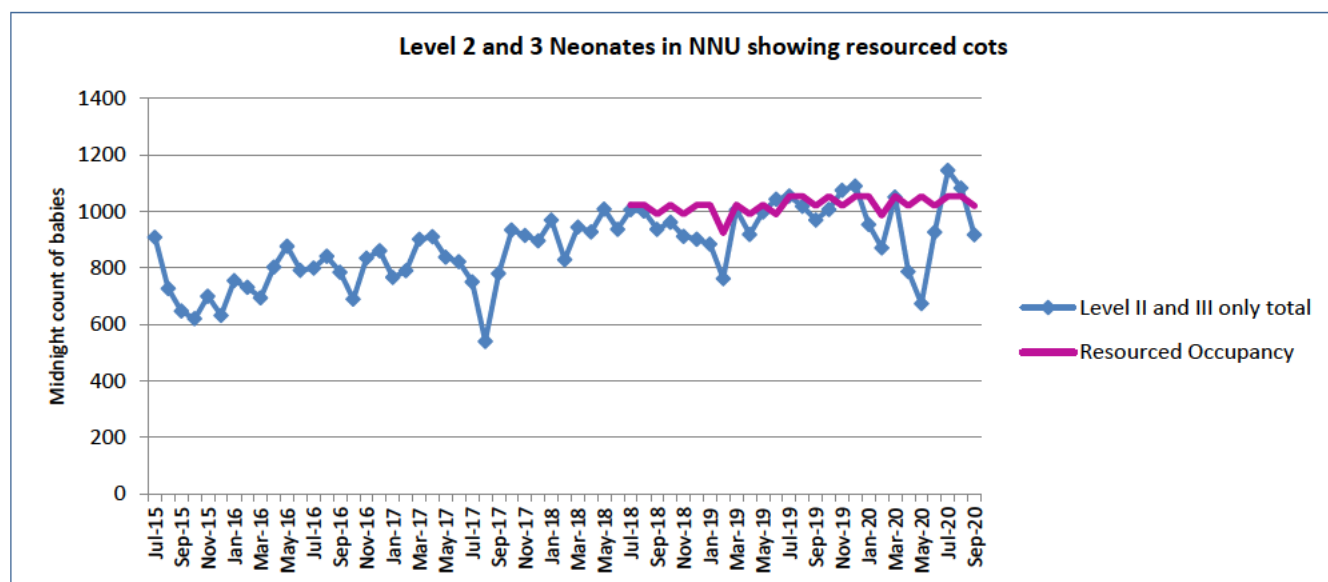


Figure 1: Sourced 05.10.2020 – Neonatal Care

Figure 1 illustrates the growth in neonatal admissions and occupancy reaching 100% almost each month and 5 months showing occupancy over 100%. Please note that this data is based on a monthly average. However, during the month there might be days that are well over 100% and days under 100% occupancy. That is the usual pattern of neonatal care and makes staffing challenging. Since July 2020 the DHB has started recruitment to staff up to 38 cots as well as staffing 4 beds in the Kidz First Children’s Hospital to take further overflow of neonates requiring a lower level of care but not ready to go home as yet.

- **How many women had to be sent away to give birth because of capacity issues over the last three years, including this year up to now?**

The three Auckland DHBs work closely on the management of neonatal cots and we do not count women or babies that are born, transferred and cared for at one of the other Auckland DHBs as ‘sent aways’. The regional principle is to have mothers and babies requiring neonatal unit care back to their DHB of domicile as soon as this is clinically safe and can be accommodated by the DHB of domicile.

By working together this closely, since 2018 there have been only been 3 women that have been transferred out of the Auckland region due to their being no cots available in any of the 4 Neonatal Units.

- **What are the additional costs associated with increasing cot capacity above budget - could you tell me by how much the unit went over budget over the last five years, broken down by year?**

The budget for neonatal cots has been increased year on year to allow for more cots to be resourced.

- **How much has the CMDHB spent on sending women away to give birth over the last five years broken down by year?**

We do not have information on the specific costs of these women/babies as they are part of the overall Inter District Flow (IDF) arrangements that DHBs have with each other.

- **Is the CMDHB expecting an increase in resourcing for its neonatal staffing in this year's budget and has this been signed off by the ministry yet? If so, by how much?**

The Neonatal Unit is increasing its resourcing to all 38 physical cots over the 20/21 financial year. In addition, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has prioritised \$5 million in funding in the '2019 Health Infrastructure Package' for an expansion of the Neonatal Unit capacity to 46 cots. We are currently finalising the Business Case for this expansion and expect to receive sign off from MoH in early December 2020.

I trust that this information is helpful. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Dr Peter Watson
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health