

20 July 2020

Esther Entropy

Via email: estherentropy@gmail.com



100 Heads Road, Private Bag 3003
Whanganui 4540, New Zealand

Dear Esther

Official Information Act Request – OIA # 12959 Number of Patients in Psychiatric Hospitals 1990 to 2010

On 21 June 2020, under section 12 of the Official Information Act, you requested the following information from Whanganui District Health Board (WDHB):

Please supply the following information under the Official Information Act (OIA):

The number of persons confined in Lake Alice Hospital in the years 1990 to 2010. Either as at 31 December of the year or annual average.
Please include the proportion of people confined per 100,000 population (rate of confinement).

These statistics are available in the New Zealand Official Yearbooks up until 1990. However, after this point only data on admissions and discharges is available. I'm researching deinstitutionalisation of mental hospitals for my honours degree.

If you need any more information from me please let me know as soon as possible.

Whanganui District Health Boards response:

The number of persons confined in Lake Alice Hospital in the years 1990 to 2010. Either as at 31 December of the year or annual average.

Lake Alice closed its doors in October 1990, so no data exists for discharges between 1990 and 2010. There is no information of this nature that we are aware of which accurately calculates the numbers confined in prior years.

Subsequently, your request is declined under Section 18, (e) & (f)

Sec 18 Refusal of requests

(e) that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found:

(f) that the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research

Please include the proportion of people confined per 100,000 population (rate of confinement).

Lake Alice closed in October 1990, so no data exists for discharges between 1990 and 2010. There is no information of this nature that we are aware of which accurately calculates the numbers confined in prior years, and therefore the calculation requested cannot be completed. Population estimates are however widely available in the public domain, or directly via StatsNZ.

Subsequently, your request is declined under Section 18, (e) & (d)

Sec 18 Refusal of requests

(e) that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found

(d) that the information requested is or will soon be publicly available

18B Duty to consider consulting person if request likely to be refused under section 18(e) or (f)
If a request is likely to be refused under section 18(e) or (f), the department, Minister of the Crown, or organisation must, before that request is refused, consider whether consulting with the person who made the request would assist that person to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal.

As per Sec 18B- WDHB have asked Business Support Manager, Kilian O’Gorman to contact you via the email address you have provided to assist you to make the request in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal.

On Tuesday, 7th July you spoke with Business Support Manager Kilian O’Gorman who suggested he would ask our volunteer Archivist to investigate further. Unfortunately this search was unsuccessful, however we would like you to have the following information:

LAKE ALICE HOSPITAL

Source – WAHB STRATEGIC PLANS 1988

Psychiatry Available Beds Acute 35

Other 197

Forensic 40

Total Beds 272

Lake Alice Hospital accepted its first patient on 5 September 1950. By arrangement with the Department of Health, Wanganui Area Health Board to cover the administration of Lake Alice Hospital from the department on 1 April 1986.

2 April 1987 from Rangitikei Mail -

“There are 250 ppts at Lake Alice. The number of beds has been reduced from 325 to 272.”

Mr Barry Moar, Lake Alice Manager –

“He is of the opinions that this latest move will enhance life for the patients of the hospital.”

MWAHB – Service Plans 1992-93

The MWAHB has more psychiatric beds per capita available than is found nationally. Approx 77% of available beds are utilised. The majority (76%) beds at L/A – the second largest provider of psychiatric inpatient beds in the North Island.

Bed occupancy at L/A (80%) is influenced by large number of long stay patients and low turnover or inpatients.

Only 15% of all inpatient psychiatric admissions to the Board’s mental health issues were to L/A Hospital (61% of Manawaroa, 21% to Te Awhina in 1990-1991).

The vast majority of care is provided from the two main general hospitals psychiatric units (82% inpatient, 97% day patient and 93% outpatients) and yet the majority of financial resources are expended at L/A/H.

In the year ending June 1990 patients admitted were 169 and 143 being discharged. Resident in the hospital ending December 1986 were 272 but by 1989 the number had dropped off to 186.

Should you have any further queries about the above information, please contact our OIA co-ordinator Anne Phoenix at anne.phoenix@wdhb.org.nz

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Russell Simpson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Russell Simpson
Chief Executive