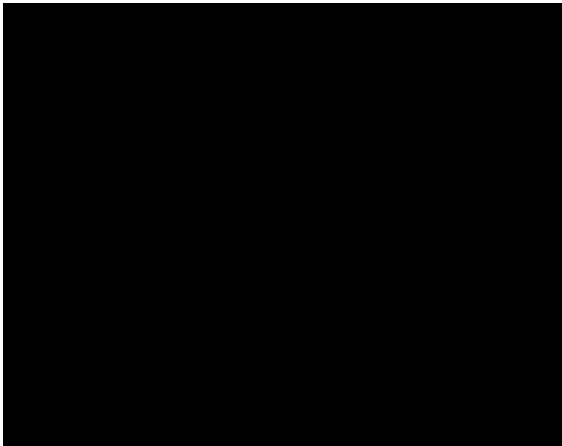


31 July 2018



Re Official Information Request – Number of maternity beds in 2018

I refer to your official information request dated 6 July 2018 for information about bed numbers and length of stay for women in the Auckland DHB maternity ward.

The information you have requested is enclosed. We have provided our responses under each of your questions below.

1. How many hospital beds there were in the maternity ward in 2018 - Jan 1 to June 30 - compared with the calendar year in 2017 and 2016.

There are 87 beds in total across the maternity service in 2018, with the opportunity to flex beds as required. There was a reduction of 5 antenatal/postnatal inpatient beds in December 2017 due to a decrease in birthing activity.

2. What was the average length of stay for women in Auckland DHB's maternity ward, quarterly, from Jan 1 2016 to June 30 2018, if recorded.

Length of stay will vary significantly depending on the type of birth and any complications that may arise throughout the pregnancy, labour and birth or postnatal period.

Women who have a normal and uncomplicated labour and birth go home directly from the Labour and Birth Suite or transfer to Birthcare for a postnatal stay. The time that women spend in the Labour and Birth Suite will vary significantly. This depends on how the woman's labour and birth progress. In 2017, the average time spent in the Labour and Birth Suite from admission until birth is 7 hours and 17 minutes. The average length of stay for women who have had a normal birth before being either discharged home with midwifery care follow up or to Birthcare, is 3 hours and 31 minutes.

There are also women who give birth vaginally and require an inpatient postnatal stay. The reasons for this vary significantly, and include (but are not limited to) baby's admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or birth complications. In 2017, these women had an average length of stay of 2.4 days. Women who have a caesarean section had an average length of stay of 3.2 days. Birthcare also offers postnatal care for these women as required, depending on their individual needs.

In order to provide you with further context in terms of the information you have requested, please note that in the fourteen years since National Women's Health moved to the Grafton site there have been significant changes to maternity care that have resulted in improved outcomes for women and babies, reduced length of stay, care closer to home in the community rather than in hospital and some women with antenatal complexities being managed on an outpatient basis. These changes are in alignment with international best practice standards. Whilst the quality and safety of maternity care has improved since this time, the demand for maternity beds has also significantly reduced.

I trust this information answers your questions.

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.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ailsa Claire".

Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive