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§ 9(2)(a)

By email: § 9(2)(a)  
Ref: H202206887

Tēnā koe § 9(2)(a)

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 24 May 2022 regarding intensive care unit (ICU) beds. Each part of your request is responded to below.

*1. Please advise how many of these promised ICU beds are now operational and will the remaining be ready by June 2022 as indicated by the govt?*

The story referred to in your request was published on 3 December 2021. In his announcement published on the same day, the Minister of Health, Hon Andrew Little, stated that he had “asked district health boards (DHBs) to identify ways of increasing intensive-care capacity within six months”. The Minister’s announcement did not say that the announced beds would be ready by June. Further information on the announcement is available at: [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/funding-extra-icu-capacity](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/funding-extra-icu-capacity). Subsequently, the Minister was advised that majority of the projects would be completed by June.

Between 3 and 16 December 2021, programme scope, schedule, and budget details were refined in collaboration with DHBs. Subsequently, the Rapid Hospital Improvement Programme was announced by the Minister of Health on 16 December 2021. Further information on this announcement is available at: [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-upgrades-local-hospitals-throughout-nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-upgrades-local-hospitals-throughout-nz).

Following the Minister’s announcement and as of 31 May 2022, the programme has delivered:

- 18 of 31 ICU/HDU beds
- 23 out of 75 new inpatient beds
- 195 out of 355 inpatient beds converted to isolation spaces and/or negative pressure.

Please see the table below for details around the projects:

#	Project/workstream	Planned completion	Actual/forecast completion	Comment
1.	Twelve ICU Beds at Waipapa (CDHB)	May 2022	Complete April 2022	
2.	Four HDU and two ICU beds at Tauranga Hospital (BOPDHB)	March 2022	Complete January 2022	Six HDU beds completed. Two of these beds become ICU beds in Dec 2023, after the Coronary Care Unit relocation.
3.		March 2022	December 2023	Two HDU beds become ICU beds. See above.
4.	Two HDU beds at North Shore Hospital (Waitematā DHB)	December 2021	Complete February 2022	
5.	Eight ICU surge beds at North Shore Hospital (Waitematā DHB)	June 2022	October 2022	

Please note, 'Completion' is the completion of the infrastructure works and fit-out of furniture and equipment. This does not equate to 'operational,' which requires other key enablers, such as workforce and operational processes to be in place.

*2. Please provide the current number of ICU beds (in terms of resourced beds) available in the country.*

New Zealand's exact critical care capacity changes daily, depending on local need, planning, and staffing. The number of resourced beds flexes each day based on demand and staffing, alongside patient need and complexity. Any daily changes in resourced beds are likely due to clinical need and the critical care system working effectively. In most critical care units, while there may be several beds identified as ICU and a number as HDU beds, there is the ability to flex between them and to match resourcing according to the mix of patients in the unit at any given time. There are usually around 285 resourced critical care beds daily.

If necessary, the overall ICU/HDU resourcing could be utilised to manage around 172 adult COVID-19 patients and 14 paediatric COVID-19 patients who require 1:1 nursing care for an extended period.

In terms of surge capacity, DHBs reported they had ventilators and ICU-capable beds that can be converted if required to increase capacity, with an estimated surge to approximately 550 beds. Previously DHBs, now Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand, have also been training nursing and other staff, who would work under the supervision of trained critical care staff, to assist with critical care patients as required.

*3. Has the MOH done any projections around the number of ICU beds that it may need during the coming winter season as Chris Hipkins has confirmed today that we would stay at orange due to the expectation that Omicron cases will rise again during winter.*

The Ministry worked with DHBs to estimate the total hospital beds (including ICU/HDU beds) that may be needed to care for winter workloads, as well as scenarios for COVID-19 and the return of other infections conditions such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus. Those scenarios were provided to Te Whatu Ora - Health New Zealand to inform their planning of how to respond to the expected demand.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Nāku noa, nā



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