
Appendix 1 – Media Enquiry from Sunday Star Times on Fax Machines

Questions relating to the use of fax machines. The following can be attributed to Shayne Hunter Chief Information Officer Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa DHBs.

Does the DHB still rely on fax services to transfer/send/receive patient files and documents?

Our three DHBs (Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa) use a number of channels to exchange a range of documents and information including fax services.

If so, is the DHB aware of the insecurities fax machines pose, including leaving themselves open to hacking? How secure are the machines used?

Today's fax machines are often incorporated into devices that are connected to larger computer networks and securely managed as part of the wider network. The risks are fairly minor and are the same as other forms of communications – e.g. faxes can be sent to an incorrect recipient in the same way that electronic or postal mail can be sent to an incorrect address. Reported incidence of this is extremely low. All our communication complies with the Government's New Zealand Information Security Manual.

Why is the DHB still using old outdated technology and not fax to email, etc.?

The DHB communicates with a range of different internal and external health providers such as GPs, rest homes, palliative care facilities, private hospitals and NGOs that still rely on paper based forms and processes. We are actively working to transition as many of our providers to electronic forms of communication.

What security measures are in place to support safe, private transfer of documents?

All DHBs take patient privacy and safety very seriously and steps are taken to ensure the safety of information and communications systems. We take precautions to minimise the risks in transferring information including providing tools to encrypt documents and emails to staff and regularly communicating to staff about the importance of using secure communication including the upcoming Cyber Security Week in October.

Should the machines be phased out?

We are working towards this in a way that ensures all our clinicians and the health organisations we interact with are able to provide care to our patients and customers without disruption.

We are guided by the government's Protective Security Requirements policy framework, the NZ Information Security Manual and the NZ Health Information Security Framework in our approach.

Has the DHB implemented Oracle software, or does it plan to?

Capital & Coast DHB and Hutt Valley DHB use Oracle database software and financial software. Wairarapa DHB uses software applications that make use of Oracle's database management and monitoring software.

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