

3 October 2018

Waitemata DHB takes ‘fair and reasonable’ approach to consumer feedback

Waitemata DHB has today agreed to expand on some of the compassionate parking options it currently has on offer.

“We have always done what we can to support people in genuine financial hardship and the record shows we have a very strong record of showing compassion on parking concessions,” Board Chair Judy McGregor said.

“Today, the Board has listened to feedback about where we could do better and how we could make the process easier for the public to understand.”

Waitemata DHB already does a significant amount to assist with car parking costs - waiving more than 63,000 parking fees (worth up to \$1.29 million in foregone revenue) over the last year.

In addition, in the first half of the 2018 calendar year, more than 494,000 cars left the DHB’s hospital sites without paying under the free 20-minute grace period – the longest such period at any hospital across the greater Auckland region.

A further 124,200 vehicles left after paying the minimum tariff of \$4. Grace period and minimum tariff exits combined accounted for around 65 per cent of all hospital exits.

Two options already available to eligible hospital visitors whose extraordinary circumstances make the cost of parking unviable are:

- the existing Congress ticket - allowing applicants free entry and exit for one week, provided their personal situations meets the DHB’s compassionate parking guidelines;
- the issuing of discretionary one-off exit tickets which allow people to leave the DHB’s hospital sites free-of-charge, provided their situations also comply with the compassionate parking guidelines.

Dr McGregor said a new discretionary \$50 weekly car parking ticket approved today will cater for an additional category of visitors who are ineligible for free parking but whose exceptional circumstances warrant a compassionate approach.

Waitemata DHB will finalise guidelines in time for the new initiative’s implementation on 1 November and will publish them on its website to provide greater transparency around eligibility.

“Our focus is on ensuring fairness and equity,” Dr McGregor said.

“It may well be that a discounted rate of this nature is appropriate in some instances and this system will allow us to make that call on a case-by case basis.”

DHBs do not receive funding for car parking infrastructure and the Board was reluctant to make wholesale changes to parking tariffs that would effectively see precious healthcare dollars used to subsidise parking.

Doing so would also mean the DHB was unable to maintain existing parking infrastructure and fund new facilities required to meet the needs of the fast-growing Waitemata population.

But Dr McGregor said the discretionary weekly ticket was a fair and reasonable response to public feedback.

“We are always willing to listen to feedback and sound argument.”

“We value this input and we have taken it on board. The decisions we have made today strike the right balance and are fair for everyone. They allow the DHB to provide still more help to those who need it without compromising our ability to improve overall car parking facilities for our community.”

ENDS

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