

27 February 2024

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Tēnā koe Steve

### Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00024286

Thank you for your email on 29 June 2023. Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora has further considered the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*“At Te Whatu Ora’s board meeting (open session) on Friday chief executive Fepulea’i Margie Apa talked about the ongoing review of waiting lists and recent challenges some hospitals have faced with their surgical backlogs. “I acknowledge the teams working in planned care at a hospital level, as well as in planning,” Ms Apa said. “We’ve had some challenges with hard access to cardiac surgery around the country. “But I understand the team is working together to support those hospitals that have not been able to get ahead with their waiting lists.”*

- 1. Which hospitals have had challenges with hard access to cardiac surgery around the country?*
- 2. Are the affected areas of cardiac surgery acute, or non-acute?*
- 3. How many patients have been affected?*
- 4. What factors have been impacting access to cardiac surgery and what areas in that field are affected, e.g., what sorts of operations?*
- 5. How long are these issues expected to continue for?”*

### Response

It is important to note that our Chief Executive, Fepulea’i Margie Apa meets regularly with executive and senior team members of Health New Zealand to discuss areas of the health sector. Furthermore, the Chief Executive receives information in differing formats from various sources, including the Weekly Reports to inform her conversations and presentations in events and key external meetings (i.e., Board meetings).

As part of the reconsideration of your request Health New Zealand is providing you with two extracts from the Health New Zealand Weekly Reports dated 12 and 19 June 2023, that covers updates from the National Cardiac Programme and relates to cardiac waitlists. This information is enclosed to you in **Appendix 1** of this letter and is released to you in full. I also wish to note that the requirement for cardiac surgery fluctuates, and regions manage their waiting lists in accordance to demand. Like all treatment, the presentation of acute cases does, at times, impact on the ability to treat elective surgery patients.

Please be assured that any decision to defer elective surgeries, are made in conjunction with clinical teams on the basis of careful consideration of patient safety, the needs of the patient and the resources available. These decisions are not taken lightly. Regions maintain in contact with patients to ensure, if necessary, their condition is reprioritised if there is a change in urgency. I hope the information we have provided you is helpful in fulfilling your request.

### How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at [hnzOIA@health.govt.nz](mailto:hnzOIA@health.govt.nz).

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Duncan Bliss**

**Director of Programmes – Delivery Unit  
Hospital and Specialist Services**

## Appendix 1

### **Te Whatu Ora Weekly Report extract - 12 June 2023:**

The National Cardiac Programme continues to focus on providing support to those districts with the highest demand. Significant system pressure exists on cardiac surgery lists around the country.

Nationally, the cardiac waiting listing increased by 22 patients to 421 for the week ending 28 May compared with the previous week:

- 324 CABG/Valve and 97 TAVI patients waiting for surgery.
- YTD planned national delivery for cardiac surgery was 3,034 with actual reported delivery of 2,605, a variance of 429, with limited staff, beds and ICU space plus incursion from acute demand continuing to be the main limiting factors.
- In the week ending 28 May, four of the five cardiac units had more patients waiting for surgery than the planned maximum number waiting. Auckland district's waiting list was below the target maximum number waiting.
- Of the 421 patients on the waiting list, 191 are within timeframe and 230 are waiting longer than expectation.

### **Te Whatu Ora Weekly Report extract - 19 June 2023:**

The week ending 28 May saw the cardiac waiting list increase by 22 (to 421 patients) compared with the previous week due to high inflows for Auckland, Waikato and Capital and Coast cardiac units.

Nationally urgency band 2 saw an increase of two patients outside their waiting time whilst the other three bands saw a combined decrease of seven:

- Outside Urgency Band 1 – two outside, one fewer than last week.
- Outside Urgency Band 2 – 21 outside, two more than last week.
- Outside Urgency Band 3 – 115 outside, four fewer than last week.
- Outside Urgency Band 4 – 92 outside, two fewer than last week.

230 patients are outside their planned timeframe for surgery and account for 55% of the cardiac waiting list.

The National Cardiac Programme meets every two weeks and continues to concentrate on providing support to those districts with the highest demand. All districts are focusing on long waiting patients, however their ability to reduce these numbers is continually impacted by restrictions such as ICU capacity and acute demand displacing planned surgeries.

Various strategies are being used across the country to ease pressures, and they are realigned in response to where demand is increasing. Southern district has opened two further ICU beds, noting recruitment will continue in order to open the remaining beds over the next year.

Auckland district is currently assisting Canterbury by accepting TAVI cases. Capital and Coast has been making progress with reducing long-waiting patients, but the waiting list has grown due to their accepting cases from Waikato and continual ICU capacity issues.

Auckland notes that by the end of June they should have all Māori patients compliant with waiting times and will then address long waiting Pacific patients. Although long waiting patients are a focus, clinicians have advised that the priority is on those with the most urgent need, consequently, several long waiting patients whose condition remains stable are not treated ahead of more urgent cases.