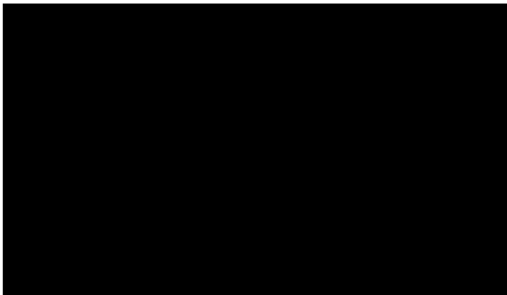




16 June 2022



Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request to TAS Health NZ requesting information relating to Theatre Nurse vacancies and the impacts on planned care at Waikato District Health Board (DHB) facilities. Pursuant to the Official Information Act (OIA) 1982 I have responded to your questions below.

1. *Can you please tell me how many theatre nurses you are currently short? I am referring to vacancies, rather than Covid absences*

15.58 FTE Theatre Nurse vacancies currently being recruited to.

14.36 FTE Post Anaesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Nurse vacancies currently being recruited to.

2. *What impact is this having on planned care? e.g. are theatres sometimes not able to be used because there are not enough nurses*

Theatre planning is based on the level of resource available. When fully recruited we are able to schedule additional procedures.

Recruitment challenges also impact our ability to cover the increased staff absence due to COVID-19 and other illnesses, at times requiring the DHB to prioritise urgent and time critical care and to reduce or pause planned care. We have continued to utilise outsourcing to ensure a level of planned care continues at all times.

3. *If there is an impact, can you please estimate what percentage of operations are not able to go ahead, or how many hours theatre time cannot be used, or any other tangible measure the impact is having*

The main factor limiting planned care delivery has been the impact of COVID-19 on staff levels. We are therefore unable to define an impact on theatre use which excludes COVID-19 as a factor. However, we can confirm that theatre spaces are generally not fully utilised when the DHB has significant vacancies for Theatre Nurses and / or PACU Nurses.

4. *What are you doing to resolve the problem*

There is a general nursing shortage and the government, the Ministry of Health and DHBs in partnership with unions are taking a wide range of measures to address this situation - including nursing recruitment campaigns, funding to support nurses who are not currently practising to return to the nursing workforce, funding to support the employment of graduate nurses, and nursing training initiatives.

Waikato DHB is also outsourcing a level of planned care surgery to local private providers.

A Planned Care taskforce has been set up to provide advice to the new health authorities - Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority, on how to provide equitable, timely and sustainable planned care health services.

Waikato DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publically-funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Lowry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christine Lowry

Executive Director - Hospital and Community Services
Waikato District Health Board