



West Coast District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

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20 February 2009

Joel George
Acting Chief Executive
West Coast District Health Board
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Dear Joel

Board Letter of Expectation – Planning for 2009/10

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board to guide your planning for 2009/10. Having spent just over a year as Chair of the Board I have, in consultation with the Board, identified a clear view on the issues that impact on the performance on the West Coast District Health Board.

2009/2010 is going to be a watershed year for the DHB. National and international economic conditions have deteriorated rapidly in the past six to twelve months creating an even greater pressure on the public sector, including health, to make more effective use of existing funding. West Coast DHB has been in a steadily eroding financial position over the last seven years and despite implementing many creative and innovative solutions to the provision of more effective and efficient service delivery, is still facing an unsustainable future in its current form.

We have a strongly committed workforce. We are one of the national leaders in the innovative use of information technology. In the past year the West Coast has ranked amongst the best of the country's District Health Boards in its overall achievement against the hospital benchmark performance indicators with outstanding results in three areas. Quarterly benchmark reports continue to show that the performance in clinical situations is amongst New Zealand's best. I would expect the West Coast District Health Board to further build upon these pleasing results.

Our performance against national health targets is more mixed with a greater focus being needed on reaching agreed indicators.

The National government recognises the new challenges for DHBs nationwide, and Minister Ryall will be setting out his expectations of DHBs in the next few weeks. The government has already indicated its intentions to "reduce the growth of bureaucracy in the sector", redirecting any savings to "frontline care", increase the participation of health professionals in decision making, encourage regional collaboration and increase investment in elective surgery, as well as making more use of private hospitals to reduce waiting lists.

As the government has also signalled that chairs of DHBs will be held accountable for improvements in productivity and quality within their organisations, one of my main focuses for 2009/10 will be to improve governance and ensure effective management. I will expect to see increased effort made by all to reduce the DHBs current operating financial deficit.

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I also see the coming year as an opportunity to further enhance our performance and seek higher levels of output, to increase our focus on collaboration, quality improvement and effective management of key health conditions and to continue in our efforts to reduce health inequalities between various population groups here on the West Coast.

I will defer any reference to priorities pending Minister Ryall's letter of expectation but the Board expects to see the following specific points included within the DHBs planning for 2009/10:

Process Improvement

- Continued work on improving patient pathways
- Increased collaboration between primary and secondary care and clinicians to reduce waste, and between primary care and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Closer linkages between primary and secondary care brought about by the shared electronic patient record
- Effective communication and dissemination of health innovations
- Streamlined processes management that achieves agreed targets within timeframe and within budget
- Prioritization of identified health needs and the reconfiguration of service delivery to meet those needs, including more inter-district sharing where appropriate.

Collaboration

- Identification of services that must be delivered on the West Coast and those that can be delivered to West Coast residents elsewhere
- Streamlined arrangements where services are delivered off the Coast
- Attracting clinicians and when appropriate other DHBs' patients to the Coast
- Opportunities to provide training for clinicians across a wider range of specialty areas

Primary Care

- A focus on the Ministry of Health targets that were not achieved in 2007/08, particularly those where the DHB's attainment is further from the target
- A reduction in waiting time overall but especially within the Buller district
- Improve the focus on primary care and opportunities to further extend its scope
- Continuation of the work already done on men's health
- An increased emphasis on primary care, particularly on health promotion and prevention services

Secondary Care

- Full achievement of agreed elective service targets through regional collaboration
- Action to retain a strong core of secondary service delivery that enables clinical staff to maintain their competence and scope of practice
- Identification of services that do need to be delivered on the West Coast, or that cannot be maintained on a 24/7 basis
- Retention of the services that can be delivered safely, effectively and within budget
- Sustaining of acute and theatre capability for emergency services

Human Resources

- Concentrated efforts on employing qualified clinical staff including working with other District Health Boards to achieve this.
- A focus on workforce development and staff mix, e.g. enabling clinicians to focus on their clinical work and letting others undertake non-clinical roles

Our strategic relationships – between clinicians and management, between preventative primary and secondary services, between ourselves, other DHBs, and between the Ministry of Health and the Minister's office will be key to improving the health of all West Coasters and in restoring public trust and confidence in the quality of care that we provide.

I look forward to working with Management to further the achievements and build on the progress made last year.

Yours sincerely

Rex Williams
Chair, West Coast District Health Board

cc Wayne Turp, GM Planning and Funding