



Office of Hon Tony Ryall

Minister of Health
Minister of State Services

COPY

19 February 2009

Mr Rex Williams
Chair
West Coast District Health Board
PO Box 387
GREYMOUTH 7840

Dear Mr Williams

Letter of Expectations for 2009/10

This letter sets out the new Government's expectations for District Health Boards (DHBs) and their subsidiary entities for 2009/10.

The new Government wants the public health system to deliver **better, sooner, more convenient** healthcare for all New Zealanders. We want shorter waiting times, less bureaucracy, and a trusted and motivated health workforce.

New Zealanders made it clear during the general election that they are concerned about the availability and quality of hospital services. Reflecting this widespread concern, the public health service's priorities this year will be sharply focused on hospital services.

Having said that, commitment to the Primary Health Care Strategy (PHCS) is bi-partisan and remains important. In 2010/11 we expect to build on the PHCS by shifting some secondary services to more convenient primary care settings (at no cost to patients), and establishing multi-disciplinary Integrated Family Health Centres. Activities during the next year should lay appropriate foundations for the successful implementation of these initiatives in 2010/11.

The new Government intends to hold you, along with all other DHB chairs, directly accountable for your performance. We expect Boards, in turn, to hold Chief Executives and management teams accountable for improved performance within each DHB. We will meet with you twice a year to discuss performance. We will be looking particularly closely at your ability to deliver in the Government's priority areas, while keeping within budget.

Expectations of all District Health Boards:

Improve service and reduce waiting times

New Zealanders should have timely, high-quality access to healthcare services when they need it. For many, confidence in the health system over recent years has been damaged by excessive waiting and delays. Resources should be moved away from the back-office and from poor quality spending into frontline services. We must improve patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Specifically, we expect you to:

- **Increase elective volumes year on year** – we expect improved volumes of both first specialist assessments and elective surgery. These improvements should achieve genuine reductions in waiting times for patients.
- **Improve emergency department waiting times** – We expect improved service in ED's in relation to both the current triage time indicators and the new emergency department length of stay target.
- **Improve cancer treatment waiting times** – We expect shorter intervals between patients' diagnosis and treatment, particularly radiation treatment.

Improve workforce retention

High clinical staff turnover rates exacerbate workforce shortages. Trusting, valuing, and fully engaging health professionals will improve patient care and job satisfaction, and assist recruitment and retention.

Specifically, we expect you to:

- **Improve clinical staff retention** – We expect you to adopt good staff practices aimed at developing cultures that value employees and promote trust. This will be clearly demonstrated through measures of increased retention, genuinely reduced vacancy rates and greater staff satisfaction.
- **Foster clinical leadership** - clinical leadership is internationally recognised as a fundamental driver for improved care. We expect that you will actively foster the development of a culture of clinical leadership within your DHB including supporting the development of clinical networks and regional co-operation.

As the Ministers of Finance and State Services advised in December, the new Government expects all crown entities – including DHBs – to maintain a strong focus on improving productivity and value for money. The deepening world financial crisis and the impact it is having here in New Zealand means all crown entities will have to look at their performance very hard, to make sure every dollar spent is well spent.

While the new Government is maintaining the future health funding track set out by the previous Government, the priorities signalled in this letter will need to be met through your existing resources. You will need to maintain strong financial discipline to ensure resources are available to meet expectations.

Increased regional co-operation is an essential part of our future direction. You continue to have operational flexibility to re-prioritise efforts and costs internally to achieve these objectives.

In your District Annual Plan and Statement of Intent for 2009/10 we look forward to your plans to progress these priorities – plus the initiatives set out in the December funding letter.

We recognise the huge challenges faced by DHBs and want to thank you for your assistance in meeting the public's priority for improved service in key parts of the public health service.

Yours sincerely

Hon Tony Ryall
MINISTER OF HEALTH