

30 September 2022

9(2)(a)



RE Official information request WCD 9734 / HNZ 3504

I refer to your email dated 31 August 2022 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from **Te Tai o Poutini West Coast**. Specifically:

I would like to request please any documentation of a letter containing outgoing or final comments or advice to the incoming Health NZ structure for the West Coast made by the outgoing chair of the former West Coast District Health Board, Rick Barker.
Did the former board chair give any advice to Whatu Ora at the time, or subsequent to, the former board being succeeded by the new Health NZ structure?

I understand there was such a letter and would appreciate a copy in the public interest.

Please find attached as **Appendix 1** the letter requested from outgoing chair of the former West Coast District Health Board Rick Barker to Rob Campbell, Chair Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand dated 30 June 2022.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Waitaha Canterbury website after your receipt of this response.

Ngā mihi / Yours sincerely,



Ralph La Salle
Senior Manager, OIAs
Waitaha Canterbury / Te Tai o Poutini West Coast.



West Coast District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

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30 June 2022

Rob Campbell
Chairman
Health New Zealand

Tena koe Rob

On behalf of the outgoing West Coast District Health Board I write with a small number of issues that Board members wish to ensure are not lost in the transition and are taken care of.

Ziman House is at the top of the list. Ziman House is a small Aged Residential Care facility in Reefton which is unusual in that it is operated by the District Health Board. For clinical reasons the Board had to reluctantly accept its temporary closure. This was a painful decision for the residents and the people of Reefton. The Board committed itself to reopening again in June, but this has been frustrated by the acute nationwide nurse shortage. The reopening, as quickly as can be organised, is a matter of integrity for the WCDHB, can you please ensure that all steps are taken to reopen Ziman House as soon as possible.

The temporary closure and subsequent events has brought to light the fragility of **Aged Residential Care** on the West Coast and we presume for rural communities generally. With smaller numbers of residents in rural locations the economies of scale for more populous areas are not possible. The Board is of the opinion that rural ARC facilities need tailored funding and support arrangements to ensure that ARC facilities can provide their services in rural locations. Residents in rural locations have generally lived their whole lives there and have intergenerational connections. Moving people out of the region for economies of scale will be distressing to the resident as well as the family and friends left behind.

Staffing has always been a challenge for the WCDHB and more recently it has been exacerbated by accommodation shortages. Providing reasonable, quality accommodation that is in keeping with the expectations of staff today has been a focus for the Board. Being short of capital, an assessment of under-utilized Board property was undertaken with the intention of realising its value and building staff accommodation in Westport, Reefton and Greymouth. The Minister has approved the sale of the initial list of properties, with others to be forwarded for consideration. The Board hopes that this initiative will not be lost sight of as the Board believes that quality accommodation will assist the recruitment and retention of staff to the West Coast.

Rural health care is challenging but it does provide opportunities. The challenge is the distance and the stretch to provide services. For the West Coast this is a population of approximately 35,000 people spread along a ribbon of road, seven hours driving time from end to end. In response to this the DHB has focused on a Rural Generalist model and utilising nurses in remote locations such as the Haast, to the limit of their practice. We hope the model is continued and developed to its potential, both within general practice and secondary care. Health New Zealand will be mindful we are sure that rural health requires a shift in thinking and approach. It also provides opportunities in that being smaller it is easier to make changes and innovate.

The West Coast DHB has made a worthy reduction in the **Did Not Attend** (DNA) area, particularly for Maori. Reducing DNAs was seen as a means of improving health care and therefore leading to healthier people. The next step for the Board was to initiate a free health check at age 50 to improve early detection and more effective treatment of life altering conditions. Having had a full check up at the halfway mark of their lives as they move to the second half it will hopefully encourage people to make a regular check a part of their personal health care. Small localities such the West Coast can provide HNZ with the opportunity to try different approaches seeking out improved methods of health care.

Mental Health care has also been a challenge for the Coast. The current facility is in poor condition. This has been recognised by funds being set aside for a new facility. The Coast looks forward to this being built in a timely manner. More importantly though will be the resourcing with staff. Timely access to mental health services is critical. With the distances on the Coast and time taken for travel, it is essential for a quality service that it be provided on the Coast. Any relocation of service to the next closest centre, Christchurch, would erect an unacceptable barrier to a worthy mental health service. In conclusion, the Board having immediate and practical experience in the administration and provision of health care services appreciate the challenges you and your Board face. The expectations are high and the resources limited. New Zealand's greatest intellectual export, Lord Rutherford once mused, if you don't have the money you have to think. You and your Board will be doing a lot of thinking. For the country's wellbeing we wish you all well and should we be able to assist, to a person, the West Coast District Health Board members will.

Kind Regards

9(2)(a)



Rick Barker
Chairman
West Coast District Health Board