



# *West Coast District Health Board*

## *Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini*

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19 October 2018

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### **RE Official information request WCDHB 9217**

We refer to your email dated 13 September 2018 to Ministry of Health - which was subsequently transferred to West Coast DHB on 28 September 2018 - requesting the following information under the Official Information Act.

***Regarding 'public hospital surgery cancellation rates' in the year ended 30 June 2018. What does the data reveal about cancellation rates by DHB?***

#### **Response:**

West Coast DHB does not routinely collect data on surgery cancellation rates. While we record a the cancellation or postponement of a surgery event and/or Operating theatre list cancellations in our patient management system, the vast majority of patients affected by these cancellations and postponements will be rebooked for surgery within a reasonable timeframe. It is quite rare that a patient who is on the waitlist and booked for surgery has a permanent cancellation of surgery (usually undertaken either at the patient's own request, or due to other circumstances, such as having moved out of area and unable to be further contacted, or having deceased).

There is no discernible pattern of elective surgical theatre session cancellations and postponements, nor the underpinning reasons why patient cases were delayed in the financial year ended 30 June 2018. We note that there were very few such events during this period.

There are a myriad of reasons that elective theatre sessions and individual patient operations may be cancelled or postponed, and the patients rescheduled to other dates. Taking a wider time period, the more common reasons for such events for our DHB during the last six financial years (in summary) have been cases where:

- specialist surgeons and/or anaesthetists are unable to attend on the day due to their own personal illness (and family bereavement in some cases below);
- Transport issues – with alpine pass road closures and with inbound flights to the West Coast for visiting specialists cancelled due to bad weather, or mechanical issues of Air New Zealand aircraft causing flights into the West Coast to be cancelled;
- acute cases have presented at Grey Base Hospital and taken precedence for available theatre space, as well as specialist, anaesthetist and clinical theatre team availability;

- visiting specialists that we rely upon in some specialties from other places have had to cancel at short notice due to the presentation of acute emergency surgery or other similar matters that need their attention in precedence at their own DHB;
- Periodic unavailability of critical staff with the anaesthetic and theatre teams;
- Patient behaviour – for example, patients ignoring advice and eating or drinking on the morning of surgery - thus making them no longer anaesthetically suitable for surgery and their case therefore having to be aborted and cancelled on the day;
- Patients were sick on the day of planned surgery;
- Patients did not show up.

Situations of list over-runs have led to surgical delay on the scheduled day of surgery has been among the rarer of reasons among those cases having to be postponed and rescheduled at West Coast DHB over the 2012-2018 period. There were no such events in the 2017-18 financial year.

Not all cases are cancelled on the day of surgery. We are able to advise some patients in advance about their cancellation and they are able to be rescheduled to a new date ahead of time.

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 West Coast DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Hamilton', written in a cursive style.

Greg Hamilton  
**Acting Executive Director**  
**Planning, Funding & Decision Support**