



West Coast District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

Corporate Office
High Street, Greymouth 7840

Telephone 03 769-7400
Fax 03 769-7791

21 March 2022

9(2)(a)

RE Further Clarification on Response to Official Information Request WCDHB 9652: WCDHB 9652a

I refer to your email dated 4 March 2022 following our response to you with our initial Official Information request WCDHB 9652, requesting further details in relation to the specific complaints made in regard to transgender and gender diversity discrimination, as well as plans to improve access to gender affirming healthcare.

Information in relation to specific complaints:

To clarify our response to your Official Information Act request, we wish to confirm that there have been complaints from three individuals relating to transgender and gender diversity discrimination received from individuals over the past three years. Two of these cases have been resolved, with one matter still currently under investigation. Accordingly, this remains unresolved and is still being worked through via our complaints process.

In line with our policy on answering Official Information Act requests, we decline to divulge any personal details that identifies or relates to individuals involved, whether they be DHB staff or members of the community, under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act i.e. *"...to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons."*

As noted in our initial response to your Official Information Request, WCDHB 9652, the adoption of the new measures outlined in our initial response to your request is aimed to help support promotion of staff awareness of gender discrimination to improve our service responsiveness.

Access to Current Gender Affirming Healthcare Services:

West Coast DHB already has established protocols for access to gender affirming healthcare. West Coast DHB follows the same pathway requirements as Canterbury DHB for accessing transgender health care services. Canterbury DHB use the Oliphant (2018) Guidelines for gender affirming health care, and these have been used to inform the clinical HealthPathways¹ relating to transgender health care services of both DHBs. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) guidelines are also taken into account as part of this pathway development.

Readiness assessments are covered within these guidelines, with assessments being undertaken by an appropriate psychologist or psychiatrist with experience in gender dysphoria before referral can be made to secondary care services in Canterbury DHB.

West Coast DHB locally delivered services relating to gender affirming healthcare include provision of hormone replacement therapy, hysterectomy, orchiectomy, voice training (through speech language therapists) and mental health counselling. These services are all generic services available to our population, not specifically dedicated or related to transgender health care alone. They do, however, have pathways to help support transgender health care. Our speech therapy service does have a very small number of people for whom they work with to provide voice training services in respect of their transgender health care support. Our local mental health services are generic and not specifically tailored to transgender services. The services that they do provide, however, recognise higher rates of depression, insecurity and anxiety experienced among people who

need mental health counselling and support relating to transgender issues; as well as help for those who adopt secondary maladjusted coping strategies such as drug and alcohol addictions.

Individuals who seek more specialised transgender related or gender reassignment related health care services from among the list of services outlined above are generally referred primarily to Canterbury DHB, but in some cases also to Auckland DHB. Services provided for West Coast residents in these tertiary health care centres are funded by the West Coast DHB as part of wider inter-district flow and tertiary services funding.

West Coast DHB provides a range of adult, youth and paediatric inpatient and outpatient services, as well as child and adolescent outpatient and community mental health services; however, none are dedicated to being transgender specific.

West Coast DHB has a series of clinical and referral guidelines outlined electronically on our West Coast HealthPathways¹ system, including a suite of pathways about transgender health. HealthPathways¹ guidelines for clinicians are in place for underage persons who present for transgender health care, with referral to tertiary services in Canterbury DHB to access early interventions during pre-puberty and early puberty, as timeliness is particularly important for long-term physical and mental health outcomes.

Access to this system is limited to health professionals working within the West Coast Health System. The information in these pathway supports clinicians to prescribe, refer and monitor gender-affirming health requests and treatment for children, youth and adults according to agreed ways of working in the West Coast and Canterbury DHBs.

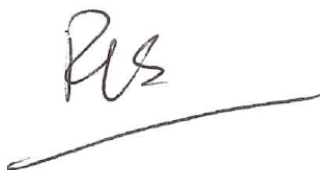
Additionally, HealthInfo for Te Tai Poutini has a set of pages about gender identity (*ira tangata tuakiri*): www.HealthInfo.org.nz although the support networks and guideline links on this page mainly refers to services provided by organisations based off the West Coast.

I trust that this additional information satisfies your interest in this matter. A copy of our original response is attached as **Appendix 1** for reference.

You may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek a review of our decision to withhold information by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz; or Freephone 0800 802 602.

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 'RLS', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Ralph La Salle
Senior Manager, OIAs
Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB

¹HealthPathways is designed and written for use during a clinical consultation. Each pathway provides clear and concise guidance for assessing and managing a patient with a particular symptom or condition. Pathways also include information about making requests to services in the local health system.

Content is developed collaboratively by general practitioners, hospital clinicians, and a wide range of other health professionals. Each pathway is evidence-informed, but also reflects local reality, and aims to preserve clinical autonomy and patient choice. HealthPathways serves to reduce unwarranted variation and accelerate evidence into practice. **Note:** This information is not publicly available.



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3 March 2022

9(2)(a)

Official Information Request WCDHB 9652

I refer to your email dated 24 December 2021 and logged 12 January 2022 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from West Coast DHB, specifically:

- ***How many people have complained regarding discrimination for being transgender or gender diverse when seeking health services on the West Coast?***
- ***Have any complaints been resolved and has any changes been made to improve services?***
- ***If not, are there any plans to improve health services with things staff training, or improving access to gender affirming healthcare in the future?***

Response.

There have been three complaints relating to transgender and gender diversity discrimination received by the West Coast DHB over the past three years, including one complaint currently under investigation. As a result of those complaints received, a page was added to the West Coast District Health Board website which contained links to material regarding gender affirmation. Our DHB's Consumer Council has also requested that we investigate a mechanism that provides the opportunity to confidentially share barriers that face our transgender community, so that these learnings might be shared with our staff.

Additionally, West Coast DHB is also looking at sharing a newly-released HealthLearn course with staff that is titled Rainbow Wellness. This course has only been made available as an on-line teaching tool within the last week. This course has been developed with an overall aim to offer education on rainbow diversity, and to support staff to be confident and competent in providing culturally safe care to people from the rainbow community in their everyday practice.

We hope that together, the adoption of these measures will help to further promote staff awareness of gender discrimination to improve our service responsiveness.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

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Yours sincerely

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Ralph La Salle
Senior Manager
Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB

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