

11 September 2024

A J A MacRae

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Tēnā koe

### Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00050360

Thank you for your email on 29 May 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*Currently gender affirming healthcare pathways listed publicly online, and on health district intranets accessible by practitioners, are not always consistent with the actual service provided (or not provided) by public hospitals. Information provided by practitioners and administrators within specialist departments often contradicts MoH guidelines for provision of gender affirming care. Patients and general practitioners encounter a lack of transparency in priority assessment and patient exclusion criteria when attempting to access certain procedures, which is immensely frustrating, and wastes both the patients' and practitioners' time. For example, a deferral letter for an orchidectomy from the Urology department at Wellington Regional Hospital provided a link to [electiveservices.govt.nz](http://electiveservices.govt.nz), where the department claimed I could find the prioritisation guidelines for orchidectomy referrals. The link has been defunct for over a decade and the website appears to have never contained the gender affirming guidelines the department claimed it did.*

*In light of this lack of transparency or clear pathways, I would like to request the following information from Te Whatu Ora,*

*1-What are the pathways for accessing gender affirming:*

- Orchidectomy*
- Hysterectomy*
- Oophorectomy*
- Mastectomy?*

*2-What are the priority assessment/triaging processes for:*

- Orchidectomy*
- Hysterectomy*
- Oophorectomy*
- Mastectomy?*

*3-Are these pathways/guidelines/practices different for different hospitals or different health districts?*

*5-If funding or resources are not available at a certain hospital or in a health district, is there a process for referring patients to other hospitals?*

*6-How many of the above procedures have been performed by each hospital/health district within the last 5 years for gender affirming reasons?*

*7-How many referrals for these procedures have been deferred/declined by each hospital/health district?*

## Response

I apologise for the delay in providing our response. The time taken is not what we aspire to. This is something we are working to get on top of as we deal with a high volume of requests and the understandably high public interest in our work.

*1-What are the pathways for accessing gender affirming:*

- Orchidectomy*
- Hysterectomy*
- Oophorectomy*
- Mastectomy?*

*2-What are the priority assessment/triaging processes for:*

- Orchidectomy*
- Hysterectomy*
- Oophorectomy*
- Mastectomy?*

*3-Are these pathways/guidelines/practices different for different hospitals or different health districts?*

*5-If funding or resources are not available at a certain hospital or in a health district, is there a process for referring patients to other hospitals?*

In order to provide the information you have requested Health NZ would need to divert personnel from their core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair Te Whatu Ora's ability to carry out our other core functions. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as it requires substantial collation.

I have considered whether fixing a charge for the supply of the information or extending the timeframe for response would enable Health NZ to respond. I do not consider that either option would remove the impact that supplying the information would have on our other operations.

*6-How many of the above procedures have been performed by each hospital/health district within the last 5 years for gender affirming reasons?*

Health NZ is able to provide the numbers for these procedures, we cannot identify whether they were performed for gender affirming reasons.

The number of publicly funded procedures from our most recent five financial years of published data for these procedures was:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Orchidectomy (block code 1184)	371	383	386	373	460
Abdominal hysterectomy (block code 1268)	2402	2379	2255	2624	2841
Vaginal hysterectomy (block code 1269)	765	827	732	519	527
Oophorectomy (block code 1243)	275	269	286	400	441
Subcutaneous mastectomy (block code 1747)	229	230	227	237	266
Simple mastectomy (block code 1748)	1380	1366	1404	1346	1440

Please note that this data is provisional and used for operational purposes. It has not been through the full quality assurance process that we use before publishing data and therefore is subject to change.

*7-How many referrals for these procedures have been deferred/declined by each hospital/health district?*

I am refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora and we have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another entity subject to the Act.

Again, my apologies for the delay in providing this response.

### **How to get in touch**

If you have any questions, you can contact us at [h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz).

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



### **Danielle Coe**

**Manager (OIA) Government Services**  
**Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora**