

**8 MAY 2018**

Jennifer Katherine Shields  
Email: fyi-request-7586-08088dea@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H201802672

Dear Jennifer

**Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your request of 9 April 2018 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

*“an update on the status of the waitlist for Gender Confirmation Surgery for transgender patients. Namely: the length of the waitlist now, progress on resuming surgeries, or, if they have been resumed, how many patients have had surgery since they have been resumed, and any communications within and from/to the Ministry about both the status of the waitlist, discussion about the current surgery rate and suggestions or plans for increasing the rate, and the process of finding a surgeon to continue surgeries.*

*Could you please confirm that the combined waitlist for both male to female and female to male GRS is at 102 people, and that as it stood in 2016 at 88 combined, it has thus increased by 14 people over two years, at over three times the current rate of surgeries?”*

The information relating to this request is itemised below, with copies of documents attached.

I have decided under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act to withhold certain information in order to maintain the constitutional convention protecting confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers or officials. This is noted in the relevant section in the table below.

Request	Response
<i>Length of the waiting list</i>	There are currently 77 people waiting for male to female surgery and 26 people waiting for female to male surgery
<i>Progress on resuming surgeries, or, if they have been resumed, how many patients have had surgery since they have been resumed.</i>	In April 2016, the Ministry began the process of referring people at the top of the male-to-female list back to their DHB specialists, so that they could be reviewed and the DHB could arrange for them to be sent overseas for surgery. To date, 9 people who had declared that they still want the surgery have been referred to their DHBs, with the following results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two eventually declined the operation</li> <li>• Three have deferred the surgery indefinitely because of current personal circumstances</li> <li>• One has moved to a different DHB for a second time and is still being processed.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is on the waiting list of an overseas surgeon, but would like to consider the option of surgery in Counties Manukau DHB</li> <li>• One wishes to wait a year to see if surgery will be established in Counties Manukau DHB</li> <li>• One had surgery in Thailand in March 2018</li> </ul>
<p><i>Any communications within and from/to the Ministry about both the status of the waitlist, discussion about the current surgery rate and suggestions or plans for increasing the rate, and the process of finding a surgeon to continue surgeries.</i></p>	<p>Attached are the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR20180198: Briefing to health ministers on potential priorities for Rainbow Policy</li> <li>• HR20180307: Briefing to health ministers on gender reassignment surgery</li> <li>• Media responses about gender reassignment surgery: June 2017-March 2018</li> </ul> <p>An internal email has been withheld on the basis of section 9(2)(f)(iv). I note that while this information is not advice directly to the Minister, it was generated in the preparation of tendering advice to the Minister. It outlines one of several options that will be tendered to the Minister with regard to the provision of gender reassignment surgery.</p>
<p><i>Could you please confirm that the combined waitlist for both male to female and female to male GRS is at 102 people, and that as it stood in 2016 at 88 combined, it has thus increased by 14 people over two years, at over three times the current rate of surgeries?</i></p>	<p>Work on the waiting lists in 2016 led to the removal of some people from the list, either because they could not be traced or because they had previously been declined surgery on clinical grounds (by the previous surgical team). The total number waiting for male-to-female and female-to-male surgery at the end of March 2016 was therefore revised to be 79 people. Over the past two years, 26 people were added to the combined waiting lists and two people (one male-to-female and one female-to-male) received surgery. The net result was that, at the end of March 2018, 103 people were waiting for male-to-female or female-to-male gender reassignment surgery.</p>

I trust this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold information under this request.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Simpson  
Chief Medical Officer