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Briefing on Gender Reassignment Surgery

To: Hon Julie Anne Genter, Associate Minister of Health

Copy to: Hon Dr David Clark, Minister of Health

Purpose

You have asked for a briefing on gender reassignment surgery, covering a number of specific points. This briefing will address your questions one by one, providing information and commentary where appropriate.

Recommendations

The Ministry recommends that you:

- a) **note** that the appointment to Counties Manukau DHB of a consultant plastic and reconstructive surgeon with overseas training in gender reassignment surgery provides an opportunity to reassess the provision of gender reassignment surgery in New Zealand.
- b) **agree** to meet with Ministry officials in order to discuss options for providing gender reassignment surgery.

Yes/No

Dr Andrew Simpson
Chief Medical Officer
Office of the Chief Medical Officer

Minister's signature:

Date:

Contacts:	Dr Andrew Simpson, Chief Medical Officer	
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Briefing on Gender Reassignment Surgery

How many, if any, surgeons in New Zealand perform sex reassignment surgery?

1. A range of surgeries are provided to people undergoing gender transition, including mastectomy, hysterectomy, orchidectomy (removal of testes), facial appearance surgery, breast reconstruction surgery and genital reassignment surgery.
2. Most of these surgeries can be provided by general gynaecologists, urologists, breast surgeons, and plastic and reconstructive surgeons, so there are a number of surgeons in New Zealand who are capable of performing these gender affirming procedures.
3. The one exception is genital surgery, which is highly specialised and requires advanced specialist training. Since the retirement of New Zealand's only gender reassignment surgery plastic surgeon in 2014 (see paragraph 7(a), below), there has not been a surgeon in New Zealand with the knowledge and skills to provide this surgery.
4. However, in January 2018, a surgeon with recent extensive overseas training in gender reassignment surgery took up a consultant appointment as a general plastic and reconstructive surgeon in Counties Manukau DHB. This may provide the opportunity to explore the option of providing genital surgery in New Zealand.

What, if any, types of sex reassignment surgery are performed in New Zealand, and what, if any, types are only performed overseas?

5. Mastectomy, hysterectomy, orchidectomy, facial appearance surgery and breast reconstruction surgery are performed in New Zealand. However, because of competing priorities, only a small number of DHBs publicly fund these surgeries for transgender people. A stocktake of DHB gender reassignment services undertaken in 2015 identified four DHBs providing these surgeries for transgender people: Auckland, Canterbury, Capital and Coast and Counties Manukau. Less than 20 people a year receive these surgeries. (See **Appendix 1**, which is a summary table of the stocktake.)
6. With regard to genital surgery, the Ministry began to fund these procedures in 2005 using the High Cost Treatment Pool (HCTP). The HCTP provides funds for treatments with proven efficacy that are not otherwise available in the public health system. It funds the provision of treatments in the New Zealand private sector or overseas.
7. The Ministry-funded male-to-female and female-to-male surgeries have been provided differently:
 - a. With regard to male-to-female surgeries, a surgical team in the private sector in Christchurch provided these procedures between 2005 and 2014. With the retirement of the team's plastic surgeon in 2014, these surgeries are now provided overseas.
 - b. With regard to female-to-male surgeries, no surgeons in New Zealand have performed these procedures, so they have been provided overseas since 2005.

If there are any sex reassignment surgeries performed overseas, does the Ministry intend to bring these services to New Zealand?

8. No decision has been made to develop genital surgery in New Zealand. This is complex surgery and requires appropriate expertise and support from a skilled team. However, the appointment of the plastic surgeon to Counties Manukau DHB provides an opportunity to reassess the provision of gender reassignment surgery in New Zealand.
9. The current use of the HCTP to fund genital surgery would be potentially impacted as under the HCTP's rules it is not to be used to fund treatments overseas when they are available in New Zealand.
10. We would welcome a meeting with you in order to discuss options for providing gender reassignment surgery in New Zealand.

How many, if any, transgender individuals have been referred to endocrine services in New Zealand in the past five years, broken down by year?

11. The Ministry does not have access to this information.

How many, if any, transgender individuals have been referred to endocrine services in New Zealand in the past five years, broken down by DHB?

12. The Ministry does not have access to this information.

13. **Appendix 1** gives the approximate number of transgender people using particular DHB services in a 12 month period.

What, if any, is the size of the current waiting list for male-to-female surgeries?

14. There are 75 people currently on the waiting list for male-to-female surgery.

What, if any, is the size of the current waiting list for female-to-male surgeries?

15. There are 26 people currently on the waiting list for female-to-male surgery.

How long does the Ministry anticipate it would take for everyone currently on the male-to-female waiting list to be seen?

16. At the current rate of provision, and assuming no attrition in the waiting list, the last person on the male-to-female waiting list would receive surgery in 50 years.

END.

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Appendix 1

DHB Gender Reassignment Services
Stocktake October 2015
Table 1

Shaded line = DHB does not provide a gender reassignment service	Approximate number of people identifying as transgender using the services in a 12 month period										Number on the national waiting list for genital reassignment surgery	
	Sexual Health Services	Mental Health Services	Youth Services	Endo-crinology	Mastectomy	Hysterectomy	Orchidectomy	Facial	Breast Augmentation	MtF	FtM	
DHB												
Auckland	84 in Auck region	4-6		10	6					11	4	
Bay of Plenty		1	15							1		
Canterbury		12			2					14	3	
Capital & Coast	Limited. 17 waiting for assessment			23		1	1			9	1	
Countries Manukau	(See Auck)		66 current	6-12			1	1		2		
Hawkes Bay										3		
Hutt Valley	(A quarter of Capital & Coast's cases come from Hutt Valley.)											
Lakes												
MidCentral				2						3		
Nelson Marlborough										2		
Northland												
South Canterbury										1		
Southern	30 new 60 follow-up			9 new 40 follow-up						9	3	
Tairāwhiti	8											
Taranaki	3-4			15-20								
Waikato	41									3	1	
Wairarapa										1		
Waitemata	(See Auck)		36	12						5		
West Coast												
Whanganui												
Unknown											1	
Total	133	135-140	117	115-130	8	7	1	1	1	65	13	

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