

Waikato DHB: Who will stay

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All six of the elected representatives on the Waikato District Health Board have plenty of unfinished business.

Canvassed by the Waikato Times on whether they would stand for the board again in the local body elections in October, the six - Sally Christie, Andrew Buckley, Martin Gallagher, Pippa Mahood, Clyde Wade and Ewan Wilson - all responded with an emphatic "yes".

Chief on their list of reasons for wanting to stick around was checking off the eight-year, \$430 million construction and redevelopment project at Waikato Hospital, due to be completed next year - although some had other motives for wanting to stay onboard.

The highest-polling candidate in the 2010 elections, Mr Gallagher was looking forward to the election and the redevelopment's conclusion.

"As a community advocate and former MP, I was a staunch advocate for the campus upgrade and I fought many battles, both here and in Wellington, to stop Waikato Hospital from being downgraded.

"Since coming onto the board I have become aware of rural health needs. We need to maintain our hospitals in Thames, Tokoroa, Te Kuiti and Taumarunui. They face a range of issues, not the least of which is distance.

We need to maintain adequate facilities for those towns."

Rural health was also a focus for Mrs Christie.

"Being based in Thames I have a particular interest in rural people. Around 70 per cent of [the DHB's] population live outside Hamilton and we need to be mindful of this."

Currently the board's deputy chairwoman, she had no intention of assuming the role of departing chairman Graeme Milne, one of five board members appointed by the Ministry of Health.

"I would not put myself forward for that role. I enjoy being the deputy and I have a particular skill set that suits that role."

Mr Wilson was particularly keen to see the Waikato Hospital redevelopment completed.

"I was there at the beginning ... I'd like to have one last turn to see it finished off."

People with business backgrounds were much more valuable to the board than those with medical backgrounds, he said.

"Our role in governance is not a clinical one at all. It's more about financial management and business systems."

"Elected members will always feel more connected to their communities, but it can leave professional gaps on the board. You need at least one lawyer and one accountant in there to get a balanced mix."

Dr Wade said he believed an extensive knowledge of the health sector was essential for board members - "You have to know what the issues are."

For him the two big issues were the hospital redevelopment and information technology.

"We use a thing called a clinical workstation. GPs use them and we have them here at the hospital. They

are different systems at different levels of development and we need to link them up. Not everything is compatible ... It's a bit like trying to put a V8 engine into a mini."

Mr Buckley's choice of issues differed from that of his colleagues and included the possible under-reporting of bad experiences by hospital patients; junk food being sold in hospital vending machines; and the bullying of staff by hospital managers.

Although she is standing down from the Hamilton City Council, Mrs Mahood has no such intention of "throwing in the towel" on her health board role.

A trained nurse specialising in palliative care, she was instrumental in setting up Hospice Waikato - and was eager not to let the board lose focus on that role.

Seven people are elected to the 11-strong board, with the balance appointed by Health Minister Tony Ryall.

The Waikato DHB was reduced to six elected members soon after the 2010 election, when Gordon Chesterman resigned from the board to concentrate on his role as Hamilton deputy mayor.

Will you stand again for the Waikato District Health Board?

Elected members

Martin Gallagher - "Yes, I will."

Sally Christie - "Absolutely yes - I'll stand again."

Ewan Wilson - "My current intention is to stand again."

Pippa Mahood - "I'm throwing my hat into the ring for the DHB."

Andrew Buckley - "Absolutely. I have a lot on my agenda."

Clyde Wade - "I will be standing again."

Appointed members

Graeme Milne (chairman, stepping down in October)

Sharon Mariu

Harry Mikaere

Gay Shirley

Deryck Shaw

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