

# Waikato Hospital hits record number of surgeries

NICOLA BRENNAN-TUPARA    Last updated 08:17 26/04/2013

The Waikato District Health Board has delivered its highest-ever number of surgeries in a month but millions of dollars had to be spent on outsourcing services to fill staffing gaps and meet targets.

The wait time for orthopaedic surgery continues to be lengthy, with more than 280 outpatients and 103 inpatients currently waiting longer than five months for surgery.

The Waikato board discharged 2760 surgical patients in March - 320 more than the same time last year and 327 more than planned.

That made it the highest ever surgical throughput achieved in a month, board members were told at their meeting this week.

Chief executive Craig Climo said it was about 40 per cent higher than in 2009 and it had been achieved while massive building work continued around staff.

"For a place the size of Waikato DHB, that's a huge difference," Mr Climo said.

But at the same time financial reports showed the board spent just over \$4 million on outsourcing of services and \$1.1m on outsourcing personnel for the month - more than a \$1m more than budgeted.

Chief operating officer Jan Adams said March had been a "busy month" as the board focused on meeting the target of having no patient waiting longer than five months for elective surgery by June 30.

She admitted the board spent more money than budgeted because it didn't have the capacity.

But the board planned to bring many of the outsourced services in house from July onwards as the theatres in the new Meade Clinical centre started opening.

"So we are projecting that our outsource service costs will be far lower."

Responding to concerns raised by board member Andrew Buckley around the cost of using locums, Mrs Adams said the costs were about 15 to 18 per cent higher than they would have been if the board had employed staff.

While salaries were about the same, the packages surrounding the use of locums - like accommodation and cars - increased the costs. "If we didn't have them, we'd have clinical service delivery problems," she said.

## **WAIT TIMES**

Total number of patients on Waikato DHB outpatient surgery wait list: 5835

Waiting over 6 months: 63

Waiting over 5 months: 481

Full list at [www.waikatodhb.govt.nz/file/fileid/46544](http://www.waikatodhb.govt.nz/file/fileid/46544).

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