

05 JUL 2019

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Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 17 June 2019, for:

- *“How many, if any, surgeons in New Zealand perform sex reassignment surgery?”*
- *What, if any, types of sex reassignment surgery are performed in New Zealand, and what, if any, types are only performed overseas?*
- *If there are any sex reassignment surgeries performed overseas, does the Ministry intend to bring these services to 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?*
- *How many, if any, transgender individuals have been referred to endocrine services in New Zealand in the past five years, broken down by DHB?*
- *What, if any, is the size of the current waiting list for Male to Female surgeries?*
- *What, if any, is the size of the current waiting list for Female to Male surgeries?*
- *How long does the Ministry anticipate it would take for everyone currently on the Male to Female waiting list to be seen?*
- *How long does the Ministry anticipate it would take for everyone currently on the Female to Male waiting list to be seen?*

On 20 June 2019, those questions that relate to the number of transgender individuals who have been referred to endocrine services in New Zealand were transferred to each district health board (DHB) under section 14 of the Act, as the information is more closely aligned with the functions of DHBs.

There is one surgeon in New Zealand who is able to perform the full range male to female and female to male gender affirming surgeries. As such, the capability is in New Zealand and individuals receive surgery overseas in rare circumstances only.

As at 1 July 2019, there are currently 130 people on the waiting list for male to female gender affirming surgeries, and 39 people on the waiting list for female to male gender affirming surgeries.

The Ministry does not have an estimated length of time it would take for everyone on those waiting lists to be seen. As such, these questions are refused under section 18(g) of the Act. The information is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that it is held by another agency, Minister of the Crown, or organisation.

In October 2018, the Associate Minister of Health took the step of removing the limit on the previous surgery rate (3 male to female and 1 female to male surgeries every 2 years), set in 2004. The Associate Minister of Health instead made this number a minimum.

Removing the cap is the first step in a process to reconsider the provision of gender affirming surgeries in New Zealand.

Right now we're working with key players, including the transgender and non-binary communities, district health boards and plastic surgeons to progress pathways of care for the transgender community here. This includes an interim arrangement of referring patients at the top of the list to Auckland-based plastic surgeon Dr Rita Yang in the private sector for surgery.

More information regarding healthcare for transgender New Zealanders is available on the Ministry of Health's website here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/transgender-new-zealanders/health-care-transgender-new-zealanders>.

I trust that this information fulfils your request. Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website (if applicable).

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Yours sincerely



Dr Juliet Rumball-Smith
Acting Chief Medical Officer