



NEW ZEALAND PRIVATE SURGICAL  
HOSPITALS ASSOCIATION INC

### **Refreshing the public health system needs tri-partisan approach**

A party politics' free approach is critical to securing future sustainability of our health services, NZ Private Surgical Hospitals Association president Richard Whitney says.

His comments follow Health Minister Dr David Clark's announced intention to terminate the National Health Targets including the national patient flow project.

"Given health, and education, are very much about the long-game, shroud-waving isn't helpful," he says.

"Removing one's political beliefs, and each parties' ideology, from the equation is critically important to providing New Zealanders with an effective health system."

Mr Whitney believes the targets weren't an accurate reflection of the District Health Boards' performance, nor of the effectiveness of care they delivered.

But he says the potential termination provides a platform from which the government can refresh the public health system's methods of planned care and continue to ensure it is patient-centric.

While he agrees that some form of KPIs must exist to provide the public confidence in the health system, the removal of National Health data is a concerning step for patients.

You can't prove or improve what you don't measure, he says.

"The introduction of the National Patient Flow information was a positive step for the health sector and its removal means that data on referrals for First Surgical Assessments will not be tracked.

"This is a concerning step by the government."

He says disclosing 'hidden waitlist' information is critical to focusing minds on creative options to address and provide patients with confidence that a 'straight game' is being played.

This is evidenced by research undertaken by the NZPSHA and the Health Funds Association that 170,000 New Zealanders need some form of elective surgery and are not on waiting lists.

Almost a third of New Zealanders who require elective surgery have had to make significant lifestyle changes due to delays in treatment.

"Public measures of elective surgery, that ensure the entire sector play its role in providing increased surgeries, are imperative to ensuring access for all New Zealanders, reduce the unmet demand and relieve pressure on DHBs," Mr Whitney says.

"We all can be a patient of the public system at a moment's notice, so we as New Zealanders want and deserve it to be as effective and efficient as possible."

---

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** Daniel Paul

**M:** 021 400 993

**E:** [daniel@theprcompany.co.nz](mailto:daniel@theprcompany.co.nz)