

Napier after hours

Due to MO:	18 March 2025	Reference	HNZ00081204
To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Mat Parr, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Central Region Martin Hefford, Director Living Well, Commissioning		
Copy to:	N/a		
Security level:	In Confidence	Priority	Routine
Consulted	N/a		

Contact for further discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Phone	1st contact
Martin Hefford	Director, Living Well, Commissioning	s 9(2)(a)	X
David Warrington	Group Director Operations, Hawke's Bay District		

Purpose

1. Following advice provided to you on 28 February 2025 (HNZ00080181 refers), you requested further information confirming that the Napier overnight service is maintained and outlining planned next steps.

Summary

2. Health New Zealand (Health NZ) has been considering options for the future of the walk-in, nurse-led overnight service in Napier, due to the clinical and workforce challenges associated with the current in-person nursing service operating from 8.00pm to 8.00am (HNZ00080181 refers).
3. As part of assessing these options, we can now advise that Health NZ plans to continue to deliver the current nurse-led after-hours walk-in service, as the minimum for Napier residents, recognising the need for these services for the Napier community.
4. The staff consultation process on the overnight service has ended and a decision will be communicated by Friday, 21 March.
5. Health NZ will look to increase the responsiveness and clinical sustainability of the overnight service via the developing use of nurse prescribers and overnight access to medical teleconsultations for the full 8.00pm to 8.00am period.
6. We will ensure there is good community awareness that the current service is for nurse-led after-hours only in a non-emergency and that people need to go to Hastings Hospital or call 111 for emergency care.
7. s 9(2)(j)

Background

8. As advised previously, use of Napier's after-hours service is low, with the service facing recruitment challenges, insufficient clinical oversight, and nursing staff unable to prescribe, resulting in a reduced after-hours service (HNZ00080101 refers).
9. A review of the service, and a consultation process with Health NZ staff, has been undertaken to determine if it is time to consider a different option for supporting the Napier community after hours. This consultation has come to an end and a decision now needs to be communicated with both staff and the community on next steps.

Maintaining overnight urgent care by supplementing a nurse-led service with medical telehealth cover

10. Health NZ has considered the options available to maintain a walk-in overnight urgent care service in Napier in the context of workforce limitations.
11. Health NZ will maintain the nurse-led walk-in service, bolstering the current service with an additional nurse prescriber. We will also supplement the service with medical cover

via a telehealth option. This will help overcome current workforce risks and provide more robust clinical oversight.

12. This will provide Napier residents with:
 - a. From 8.00pm to 8.00am the existing Health NZ nurse-led walk in service
 - b. An additional nurse on the overnight shift with the ability to prescribe, and
 - c. Support from a medical telehealth service providing free overnight access to medical care.
13. Patients will initially be triaged by a nurse and then may then be connected directly to a clinician via the supporting medical telehealth service or may choose to schedule later a virtual appointment.
14. In conjunction, Health NZ will run a community awareness campaign that reminds people to go to Hastings Hospital, or dial 111, in an emergency.
15. This service will exceed the requirements of the national urgent care framework for a provincial service. It will also maintain enhanced overnight and weekend access in Napier, to reflect the longstanding commitment to the community.
16. To implement this decision, Health NZ will:
 - a. Onboard the previously procured telehealth provider to support the nurse-led service and deliver medical cover. We expect this to be in place by the end of April.
 - b. Recruit 2.5 new nurse prescriber FTE. We will start recruiting in early April. As these positions are appointed, we will increase the number of staff on each shift. Over time, we will be able to support the service with two Registered Nurses (RN) per shift, rather than an RN and a Health Care Assistant.
 - c. Advise current nursing staff of the outcome of the consultation process by 21 March, which will mean they continue with their current roles.
17. In addition to these immediate actions, we will consider future options to supplement the service (e.g., support from a Nurse Practitioner, on-call clinical pharmacist to support medication dispensing).
18. The addition of the telehealth option will cost approximately \$920,000, while an additional nurse with prescribing ability will cost a further \$920,000 per annum. In total, this option will cost approximately \$1,840,000 per annum – an additional \$920,000 on the current service cost. Note that these costs are likely to reduce over time as we need to further test with the telehealth provider this revised option. These costs will be absorbed by Health NZ.
19. The benefits of this option include:
 - a. continuation of existing walk-in service.
 - b. medical consultations offered (as well as nursing) delivering a better patient experience.
 - c. nursing ability to prescribe, offering an enhanced service.
 - d. people directed to the right level of care at the right time.

- e. stronger clinical oversight with access to medical advice for nursing staff and patients.

20. There are also risks to this option that will need to be monitored. These include:

- a. The ability to recruit nurses with prescribing ability (an additional 2.5 FTE nursing resource will be needed to cover a 12-hour shift, seven days a week).
- b. Increased cost of the service, noting the low volumes attending.
- c. That people will continue to access the service instead of more appropriately going to Hastings Hospital or calling 111.

Next Steps

- 21. Health NZ staff will be advised on the outcome of the consultation process.
- 22. Hawke's Bay district will engage with the telehealth provider to progress the telehealth option supporting the walk-in nursing service.
- 23. Communications will be developed that provide the community with the rationale for the change, how it will offer a better service, and key timelines for the change.
- 24. s 9(2)(j)
- 25. We will keep your office advised of any communications to the local community.