

Draft

9 August 2001

Bob Henare
Chairman
Capital and Coast District Health Board
Private Box 7902
WELLINGTON SOUTH

Dear Bob

Submission on the Consultation Document for Health and Disability Services for Wellington, Porirua and Kapiti

The Wellington Regional Council welcomes the opportunity to express its views on the Consultation Document for Health and Disability Services for Wellington, Porirua and Kapiti. As you are aware this Council takes an advocacy interest on issues of regional significance, on behalf of the Wellington regional community. In addition we have worked recently with Capital and Coast Health to improve bus services between Porirua railway station and Kenepuru and between Paraparaumu, Kenepuru and Newtown.

The Regional Council believes that Capital and Coast Health's plans for Porirua and Kapiti Coast are a significant step-forward in improving health outcomes for those communities. We commend the efforts you have taken to understand the different health needs of the Porirua and Kapiti populations. We are particularly heartened that there will be a 24 hour accident and medical emergency service and upgraded diagnostic equipment in Porirua. We note that these services will also serve the residents of Wellington City's northern suburbs, particularly Tawa.

Nevertheless, we are concerned that the proposed Porirua services are at level 2 and not level 3, as publicly promised by the Minister of Health. Therefore, inequitable access to secondary hospital services in the region will remain. In the Hutt Valley there is a full secondary hospital which services a population of around 130,000. Although the combined population of Porirua, Kapiti and Tawa is around 100,000, these communities will only enjoy limited day services at Kenepuru and Paraparaumu and be expected to travel to the Newtown campus for services requiring an overnight

stay. It appears that the current number of overnight beds at Kenepuru will reduce to nil. In our view this is unacceptable and unrealistic that these beds are going to be removed.

The Regional Council acknowledges that a number of innovative health initiatives are planned to address the unacceptably high level of hospital admissions in Porirua. However we question whether it is realistic to expect a significant improvement within a five-year timeframe.

Our bottom-line is there should be no consideration of closing Kenepuru for overnight stays until it can be clearly demonstrated that the demand for existing beds has declined. We cannot imagine circumstances where there will not be a need for a number of overnight beds, over and above maternity and mental health. It is not good enough for Capital and Coast Health to use the excuses of financial costs and staff shortages. These issues need to be addressed actively, and not at the expense of already disadvantaged communities.

The recent announcement at the public consultation meeting at Porirua that there will now be some beds at Kenepuru for patients recovering from operations at Wellington Hospital is welcomed, but should not be used as an excuse for removing all other beds.

We consider the proposed health improvement markers are a positive initiative and will help to ensure Capital and Coast Health is publicly accountable for improving health outcomes. However, we consider that the proposed markers, as they are presently formulated in the Consultation Document, do not focus sufficiently on improved health outcomes. We hope that Capital and Coast Health is planning to further develop these health markers. The Regional Council would be happy to assist with any further development, particularly for those markers relating to accessibility where we can offer considerable expertise in transport planning.

We look forward to an ongoing positive working relationship with Capital and Coast Health, in the interests of the Wellington regional community.

Yours sincerely

STUART MACASKILL
Chairman