

Aide-Mémoire

Further information about activity to improve access to cancer treatment in Te Waipounamu

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To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Martin Keogh, Deputy Chief Executive Te Waipounamu		
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Contact for further discussion (if required)			
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Hamish Brown	Group Director of Operations, Waitaha Canterbury		

Purpose

1. This paper provides you with the information you requested on actions and initiatives underway to improve access to cancer treatment in Te Waipounamu.

Background

2. On 17 July 2025 the Ministry of Health provided you with information [H2025069154 refers] on performance data and advice related to the Faster Cancer Treatment (FCT) target in the Canterbury and Southern Districts. Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) consulted on this paper.

Discussion



The workforce required to deliver the volumes of an additional LINAC is in recruitment

8. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the FTE in recruitment to support the delivery of an additional LINAC per day.

Table 1. A breakdown of FTE being recruited to as of 28 July 2025 for Waitaha.

Role	FTE currently recruiting	FTE currently recruited to (to date)
Radiation Oncologist (RO)	2.5	Interviews conducted and aim to offer roles in the next two weeks. Likely no increase to RO FTE until early 2026, due to completion of training and/or relocation

Radiation Therapist (RT)	7.0	Predicted that additional RT will be recruited to by Feb 2026
Radiation Therapy Assistant	1.0	0
Medical Physicist	2.0	1.0 in November, out to international advert for other 1.0FTE
Registered Nurse	1.22	Interviews conducted, references checked and offers likely in next two weeks
Nurse Practitioner	1.0	Curriculum being set for the training and will commence early 2026
Clinical Nurse Specialist	0.4	Ad out for recruitment
Oncology Social Worker	0.25	0.25
Administrator/Receptionist	1.20	Ad out for recruitment
Informatic Specialist	0.5	0
Medical Secretary	1.0	Ad out for recruitment
Māori Kaimahi	1.0	1.0
Dietician	0.25	0
Speech and Language Therapist	0.1	0
Resident Medical Officer	2.0	Recruited to from national recruitment process. Will commence Feb 2026.

Timelines for when full recruitment is expected to be complete:

9. It is anticipated that all Radiation Oncology (RO) roles can be filled within the next 12-18 months. These vacant roles are a significant contributor to the bottleneck in waits for First Specialist Appointments. Recruiting for ROs from overseas is often a long and difficult process, and successful candidates can take up to 12 months to relocate.
10. Recruitment for Radiation Therapists (RTs) is predicted to be complete by February 2026.

Additional opening hours are expected within the next 12-18 months

11. Once the clinical roles are fully recruited to, the additional opening hours will be expected to go live. This is expected within 12-18 months.
12. However, as recruitment occurs, hours will be incrementally increased:

- a) Opening until 6pm, then;
- b) Opening one LINAC until 8.30pm; and then
- c) Opening the second LINAC to 8.30pm.

Outsourcing radiation treatment is feasible but expensive

- 13. Continued outsourcing of radiation treatment is feasible in Canterbury. The pricing structure is dependent upon the complexity of the treatment required and determines how many patients are referred each week.
- 14. Additional outsourcing can be expensive when compared to what can be achieved if the same money were to be invested into the public system. A proportion of outsourcing will need to continue until the public system can operate independently with the two-LINAC facility operational on the Burwood campus.

Next Steps

- 16. We will provide monthly updates on recruitment activity via the weekly report.