

MEDIA ADVISORY

TO: Newsroom

FROM: Senior Media Advisor

DATE: 24 March 2020

SUBJECT: **Canterbury DHB postpones non-urgent surgeries and non-urgent outpatient appointments, to focus on the COVID-19 response**

In light of the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 23 March that we have escalated to COVID-19 alert level 3, moving to level 4 tonight (Wednesday 25 March), Canterbury DHB has made the tough decision to postpone all non-urgent surgeries and all non-urgent outpatient appointments, with immediate effect and until further notice.

Acute and trauma surgery will continue to be delivered as well as urgent non-deferrable surgery for cancer and other conditions. Function-saving procedures will continue such as Avastin injections for eyes to preserve sight.

Canterbury DHB Chief Executive David Meates says the decision to postpone elective services is to reduce and control the spread of COVID-19 in our New Zealand communities and allow our health system to focus our precious resources on meeting the challenges of COVID-19.

"This is a nationwide, pro-active and government-led response and all District Health Boards and their health partners have been tasked with ensuring we are ready to support our people to stay well, to help them manage at home and to provide care for them if they are unwell enough to need it," David says.

"Our whole health system is, and will continue to be, at the forefront of our national response and we need all our capacity, including staff from right across our health system, to be able to focus on what will be required of us for the foreseeable future."

"It is a tough decision to have to make, in light of the pain and distress that will be prolonged for people who have already waited too long for their surgery. To them, I offer my sincere apologies and hope they understand why this decision is necessary. I hope they can be patient a while longer – it's important to stress that we are postponing, not cancelling."

“As well as freeing up staff and other resources for an anticipated influx of patients with COVID 19-related complications, this measure has the added benefit of reducing everyone’s exposure to COVID-19, so that our health professionals are well and available when and where they are most needed over the coming days and weeks,” Mr Meates says.

“We will make a new appointment for the people who had a procedure or outpatient appointment deferred as soon as we are in a position to reinstate elective surgery and normal outpatient activity. We are not certain when that will be. In the meantime, thank you for your understanding and support.”

This early and decisive action is crucial to our COVID-19 response and will save New Zealander’s lives as we Unite against COVID-19.

ENDS