

26 November 2025

Paul Goulter
Chief Executive
Tōpūtanga Tapuhi Kaitiaki o Aotearoa | New Zealand Nurses Organisation

Kia ora Paul,

Thank you for your letter received 10 November 2025 regarding the Coroner's findings into the death of Mr Leonard Collett.

Health New Zealand (Health NZ) Taranaki again extends our deepest sympathies and condolences to Mr Collett's whānau.

We also want to acknowledge the coroner's findings and the significant emotional impact this event had on the Emergency Department (ED) nursing team at Taranaki Base Hospital.

The Coroner's expert's evidence during the inquest was critical of the actions of certain nurses.

We also note the Coronial findings [at 75] indicate these were provided to NZNO and the Nursing Council: *"I would draw particular attention to the critical importance of quality nursing assessment and intervention, together with the deficiencies in clinical recording identified in this matter."*

In your letter you said you wanted to hear from us about the steps Te Whatu Ora is taking to remedy the serious understaffing at Taranaki Base Hospital ED.

As recorded in the coronial findings, at the time of Mr Collett's presentation on 16 July 2020 at 4.50pm, the ED was staffed to its full rostered capacity.

Over recent years we have made improvements to our staffing and rosters to ensure that patients presenting to Taranaki's Emergency Department receive the care they need:

- In 2021 and 2022 we reviewed shift patterns to better align with peak demand periods. This has led to improved coverage and reduced fatigue.
- We are better equipped to manage demand surges. We monitor staffing metrics carefully to ensure that ED is as well staffed as possible to meet times of high demand and can draw on other hospital staff as needed.
- We have filled all but one 0.8 FTE nursing vacancy, for which recruitment is underway, and there are currently no SMO vacancies in our ED.

With these improvements in place, we are ensuring that Taranaki Base Hospital's ED is equipped to meet the community's need and provide the care that people can rely on.

We have also introduced additional clinical support during high-volume periods to strengthen decision-making and patient flow.

The changes include a Fast-Track Nurse and a dedicated Flow Duty Nurse Manager. In addition, the Associate Clinical Nurse Manager role was established in 2022 alongside the Clinical Nurse Specialist – Manaaki Mana role, both of which provide valuable senior nursing oversight.

Our current management processes ensure daily visibility and proactive oversight of staffing and operational needs.

An 8:30am operational huddle is attended by ED leadership (Associate Clinical Nurse Manager) and safety briefings are conducted at every shift handover by the Clinical Nurse Coordinator. Weekly senior nurse meetings are held on Mondays, supported by fortnightly SMO meetings and weekly RMO meetings.

We also maintain strong oversight of our workforce, monitoring key staffing metrics such as sick leave, overtime, and vacancy rates on a weekly basis to support proactive planning.

Additional cross-service support is available through our Integrated Operations Centre, which enables flexible deployment from other services to support ED during peak or critical periods.

In your letter, you also wanted confirmation that funding to recruit into the ED vacancies was approved.

I can confirm that funding is in place, and at present ED vacancies are well recruited, with additional resources as outlined above.

As highlighted earlier, we are near 100 percent recruitment in our ED with 32.65 doctors and 61.28 FTE nurses, plus other enabling ED staff. We have a 0.8FTE nursing vacancy, that we expect to have filled soon.

Finally, on behalf of Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora, I again extend my sincere apologies to our Emergency Department kaimahi for any stress or difficulty they may have experienced.

I want to acknowledge the significant contributions of our ED kaimahi, whose compassion and dedication to our patients and whānau remain central to the care Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora strives to provide.

We remain deeply grateful to our ED staff for their dedication and the high standard of care they deliver every day.

Ngā mihi nui,



Cath Cronin

Executive Regional Director

Te Manawa Taki | Midland Region