

New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons/ *Te Kāhui Whakamōhou Kiri* hosts National Plastic and Reconstructive Service Forum

May 2024

The New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons/ *Te Kāhui Whakamōhou Kiri* hosted a meeting of key players responsible for the delivery of public plastic and reconstructive surgery services. Invitees included surgical and operational managers from the major hospitals providing plastic and reconstructive surgery services, key decision makers in the Te Whatu Ora Hospital Specialty Services unit, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) AoNZ and partners in other government funded health services.

Key discussions focussed on the challenges and opportunities facing each unit, and identifying and acknowledging the many shared challenges across units. Also addressed were the challenges facing the Surgical Education and Training Programme for plastic and reconstructive surgery, an update on national services including the National Burn Services, breast reconstruction services, cleft lip and palate surgery, gender affirmation surgery and the limited capacity of elective surgery.

An update on the progress and development of the New Zealand Breast device registry was provided with attention drawn to the ongoing concern over the lack of national government funding required to ensure the longevity and future of the registry.

The key issues identified and discussed at the meeting included:

- The current shortfall of 14 consultant positions to meet current service demands across Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Workforce distribution: The majority of plastic surgery services supported by specialist plastic and reconstructive surgeons are located in tertiary centres. This results in an inequity of care and inequity of access to service for patients in rural/regional locations.
- Infrastructure capacity: There is limited availability and access to operating theatres for plastic surgery which negatively impacts on delivering of the service.
- Negative impact of the increasing volume of non melanoma skin cancer on other plastic surgery services as resources are diverted away from other plastic surgery services to support and manage the growing volume and demands of non melanoma skin cancer.
- Loss of dermatology services in many centres is being picked up by plastic surgery units which diverts resources away from other plastic surgery services.
- Elective plastic surgery access: There is a lack of equity of access for many patients who suffer from debilitating and/or body image issues such as elective breast surgery including breast reduction, breast asymmetry, delayed breast reduction; paediatric conditions; elective hand surgery; functional, non-traumatic reconstruction or post bariatric body contouring.
- Capacity and outsourcing is not consistent across the country.
- Insufficient number of training posts to support workforce needs.
- Lack of connection between training and employment – young Fellows heading overseas on completion of training.

For more information please contact the The New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons/ *Te Kāhui Whakamōhou Kiri* via email info@plasticsurgery.org.nz