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Mixed results for the Nthld DHB

In Brief...

The Northland DHB scored first equal (as did 17 others, in a field of 21) in one category of the health targets published yesterday, but conceded that it had work to do in a number of other areas.

Northland ranked first equal in terms of shorter waits for cancer treatment, but 12th for shorter stays in emergency departments, ninth for improved access to elective surgery, 19th for increased immunisation rates, 15th in terms of providing better help for smokers to quit and 16th in terms of better diabetes and cardiovascular services.

Northland DHB clinical services general manager Dr Nick Chamberlain said further progress in those areas would be required by July next year, but the board's ability to capture health care data, from within its hospitals and the primary sector, was causing some coding issues that could be rectified but

might have skewed at least one result.

"We are confident that our smoke-free performance will be higher than that listed once the coding issues are resolved," he said.

"Our smoke-free team is one of the best in the country, and we also have a number of projects in place to reduce the prevalence of tobacco smoking in Te Tai Tokerau.

"Each target is one of a number of methods we use to measure our performance, and while these new targets have been challenging to implement, they will produce measurable gains through steady and repeated improvement."

Targets did not replace other health priorities, he added, but were essential performance indicators, providing DHBs with a focus for action and a means of measuring the impact they were having in terms of improving health for all New Zealanders.

"We are confident that our smoke-free performance will be higher than that listed once the coding issues are resolved."

Dr Nick Chamberlain, Northland DHB clinical services general manager

More funding

Meanwhile Health Minister Tony Ryall has dismissed claims from Labour MP Ruth Dyson that impending funding cuts would see Northlanders deprived of treatment.

She said last week that DHBs around the country were preparing to turn thousands of patients away from emergency departments, diabetes programmes were being scrapped, mental health funding was being reduced and health promotion/prevention programmes were being dumped.

"Health services around the country are being placed under increasing pres-

sure to reduce spending, which means boards in almost every region will need to cut patient services," Ms Dyson said, adding that cutting the funding of important health programmes would drive doctors and nurses overseas.

Mr Ryall's response was that Northland could expect to receive more funding next year, not less.

Northland received \$394 million in government health funding in 2007/08 and \$434 million in 2008/09.

"The Northland DHB got an extra \$27 million, a seven percent increase, this year, and it will get more money next year," Mr Ryall said.

"Next year's increase will be smaller

than this year's, but the total will still go up."

Health had this year received half of all new government spending, \$750 million.

But the recession had reduced new spending next year to \$1.1 billion, so obviously health's increase would be smaller.

"But all DHBs will get an increase of some size," the Minister said, adding that the government had said all along that the DHBs had to shift money out of low-quality spending areas and back office functions and into frontline services.

Northland DHB funding manager Kim Tito told *The Northland Age* last week that he was unable to comment on funding levels yet, given that they were not yet known to the board.

The DHB would be in a better position to see the way ahead by next month, he added.

Remembering Mrs Julian

Pupils and staff at Kaitiaki's Abundant Life School have staged a memorial service for Barbara Julian, who died at the hands of an intruder in her home on November 4. Mrs Julian worked at the school as a relief teacher for some years, until the time of her death. A group of students performed one of her favourite stories, "Wombat Stew", at the assembly, and many also sent cards and poems to her family. "At times such as this it is comforting to remember that God is in control and He has a plan for us and our lives," principal Dr Peter Ferrar said. "He knows all things and understands all things. Our sincere and utmost condolences to her whanau and to all in our community who are grieving for her."

Charged with snatching

A 22-year-old Kaitiaki man has been charged with robbery, thanks in part to responses to an appeal for information published in *The Northland Age* after a woman lost her handbag to a fleet-footed thief last week. The woman, who had just withdrawn a sum of money from an ATM machine, was kicked in the chest after she and her assailant fell to the ground as they struggled over the handbag.

For High Court callover

Thirty-four-year-old Kaitiaki woman Noreffell Davis, charged with the murder of her two-year-old daughter in Kaitiaki in August, will appear before the High Court at Whangarei on February 11 for callover. She is currently in custody, and has yet to enter a plea.

A reluctant customer

A very drunk woman declined all offers of assistance after she suffered some kind of mishap outside a Kaitiaki bar last week. According to the police the woman, who was believed to have broken ribs and a broken nose, suggested that the officers, and the St John crew, relocate themselves to another place, as it were, then acted in similarly belligerent fashion at Kaitiaki Hospital. She was eventually taken home, where another occupant of the address displayed a similar attitude.

Starting young

A Far North School is to take disciplinary action against four girls, aged five to 11, who according to police took another female pupil into a gymnasium closet last week and "bashed her up". The children's parents have also been advised of what took place.

Taipa again

Police are investigating another burglary at Taipa Area School, a spokesman saying a computer hard drive was taken and that the common room was "turned upside down". Two letter boxes at Taipa, both owned by teachers, were also damaged last week.

Fireworks go on

A Kaitiaki resident says she has been assured by police that on-going use of fireworks, two weeks after Guy Fawkes' Night, is not against the law. The woman said she and other elderly residents of Grigg and Jameson streets were becoming distressed by the regular explosions, complaints to the police being referred to noise control, who referred them back to the police.

Kaitiaki teenager charged with murder

A 17-year-old Kaitiaki youth was last week charged with the murder of Barbara Julian in her home in Kaitiaki on November 4.

Jameel Job, unemployed, appeared in the Kaitiaki District Court on Thursday afternoon on a charge of murder, which police had laid earlier in the day. Unshaven and clad in a blue T-shirt, Job did not speak or meet the eyes of any of those in the public gallery.

The back row of the gallery was filled with at least ten members of Mrs Julian's extended family. Four or five of Job's family members were also present.

His lawyer, Doug Blaikie, said a psychologist's report had found Job was mentally competent to instruct a lawyer, but the report did not address the issue of his sanity at the time of the homicide. JP Eric Shackleton agreed to Mr Blaikie's request for a further two-week remand to allow time for a mentally impaired person's report to determine whether he was sane when Mrs Julian died.

He remanded Job to appear again in the Kaitiaki District Court on December 2. No request was made for name suppression on the murder charge.

As Job was led out of the courtroom a woman called out, "I love you son." A member of Mrs Julian's family responded, "We don't. We hate him."

The 70-year-old semi-retired school teacher's body was found by neighbours in her Matthews' Avenue home on the afternoon of November 4. She was to have hosted a get-together that afternoon; her friends became worried when she failed to open the door.

Police made an arrest a short time later, although until last week the alleged offender was only charged with being on a property unlawfully.



THIS IS HOW you do it — lessons in building with rammed earth got under way at Ahipara yesterday, and will continue for the rest of the week. Photo supplied.

The promise of homes for the whanau

More than 50 people representing marae from around Te Tai Tokerau converged on Ahipara yesterday for the first session in a week-long workshop designed to teach them how to build whareuku, or rammed

earth homes, and equip them to pass that know-how on to others.

Hapu from Kaikohe and Moerewa were amongst those who were keen to see what alternatives are available for providing their whanau

with good housing at an affordable price, along with kaumatua and kaimahi from Te Hiku o Te Ika and a number of Pakeha, already knowledgeable about the rammed earth building system and willing to share

that knowledge.

The workshop, which will continue for the remainder of the week, has been put together by Ahipara Hapu Gardens, Kainga Enterprises and Auckland University.



A long and winding road

Nineteen-year-old Tomo Chisnall wasn't the first teenager to baffle his parents with what they regarded as a daft idea, but he has their support now — and a very handy GPS unit which they supplied him with — as he skateboards his way from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

Tomo's making his marathon journey in memory of his best mate, Marcus O'Malley, who lost his life (at the age of 34) to cancer two years ago, and to raise funds for the Cancer Society in Nelson, his home town, and the local hospice.

He plans to skate six days each week, taking only Sundays off, and if all goes according to Hoyle he will reach Bluff on January 5.

His longboard has bigger wheels than most, the only concession made to the fact that it has a long and winding road to traverse, but when the surface gets too rough Tomo hops off and carries it. One way or another he will complete the journey under his own steam.

And it's not all plain sailing.

Sticking to his goal of covering 50 kilometres a day hasn't been easy given Northland's terrain and blisters on his pushing foot, and while Tomo has begun to accrue plenty of positive encounters with passersby — including motorists who have stopped to donate to his cause or share stories about cancer — others were cut from a very different cloth.

He has collected more than his fair share of one-fingered salutes, and just short of Taipa, a driver flashed his lights, tooted, turned around and launched into a tirade of obscenities that, by all accounts, would make Hone Harawira blush.

Tomo told him what he was doing and why, earning the retort that the irate driver didn't care, or words to that effect, and that he should get off the road.

Tomo's being shadowed on his way south by another 19-year-old, aboard a support vehicle.

TOMO CHISNALL pauses in Kaitiaki for posterity on his long journey to the bottom of New Zealand, in memory of his best mate.

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