

# Waikato health board pleased to lose wooden spoon

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The Waikato District Health Board is no longer the worst in the country when it comes to getting patients seen in a timely manner - but it is still languishing close to the bottom of national rankings.

In a report to yesterday's health board meeting, chief executive Craig Climo said the board had lifted from last to second last of the country's 20 health boards, which under the Ministry of Health's health targets programme are ranked on their success at getting patients admitted, discharged or transferred from the emergency department within six hours.

The wooden spoon is now held by Capital & Coast District Health Board.

While the ministry's target is for 95 per cent of patients to be dealt with within the six-hour timeframe, Waikato managed 89 per cent in the third quarter of the financial year - up from 88 per cent in the second quarter.

To date in the fourth quarter it is sitting about 90 per cent.

"The six-hour target continues to be a matter of significant frustration," Mr Climo told the board.

"We will get to the 95 per cent - it's just a matter of when."

Only one health board met the six-hour target all the time - West Coast.

Meanwhile, the battle to achieve other health targets set by the Government has produced some varied results.

Waikato has dived to the bottom of the table on getting cancer patients into radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment within four weeks, but only because it was the only board that had not achieved a 100 per cent success rate.

It missed the target because of just one patient, who fell just outside the timeframe, Mr Climo said.

"It's a good news story for the system when a single patient can influence it to that extent," he said.

It was also good news on the anti-smoking front, with the board's provider arm, Health Waikato, reaching a 95 per cent success rate in May for giving patients who smoke information and support to quit.

Board member Andrew Buckley said he thought all smokers should be made to submit information on smoking whenever they dealt with their GP or local medical centre.

However, Mr Climo said making the process mandatory would prove difficult.

"There's a question over how well it would go down. Patients won't want to deal with another screen that delays them from getting to the information they are actually looking for ...

"These are systems that are owned by general practice and I think we should stop short of being dictatorial."