

20 April 2026

Hannah H

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Tēnā koe Hannah

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00201853

Thank you for your email that was transferred to Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) from the Office of Hon Simeon Brown in his capacity as Minister of Health on 19 March 2026, asking for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

- 1. The number of SMOs who have left employment in each district/former DHB area over the past 12 months (including resignations, retirements, and other separations).*
- 2. The total FTE represented by those departing SMOs in each district/former DHB area.*
- 3. Where available, any internal reporting or analysis summarising trends in SMO attrition over this period.*
- 4. Any data or reporting comparing SMO departures to new SMO appointments (i.e. net workforce change) over the same timeframe.*

Response

Health NZ's Health Workforce Information Programme (HWIP) holds data on the district employed workforce providing a national, regional and local picture of the health and disability sector workforce. HWIP collects data at the end of each quarter, and data reported to HWIP are those reported at the close of business on the last day of each quarter. Further information about HWIP is available at www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-health-professionals/health-workforce-development/health-workforce-initiatives/health-workforce-information-programme/.

As HWIP data is collected and finalised quarterly, Health NZ does not centrally hold the data you have requested from 19 March 2025 to 19 March 2026.

In order to collate this data outside the regular HWIP reporting cycle, we would need to manually collate this data from each Health NZ District. This would require diverting personnel in each district from their core duties and allocating extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impair our ability to carry out our other core functions.

I am therefore refusing your request under section 18(f) of the OIA as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

I have considered whether fixing a charge for the supply of the information or extending the timeframe for response would enable Health NZ to respond. I do not consider that either option would remove the impact that supplying the information would have on our other operations.

To assist you, we have provided the most recent data available for the last calendar year, at the end of each quarter, from 1 January - 31 December 2025. This data is attached as **Appendix One**. **Questions 1 - 3** are provided on the first sheet, while **Question 4** is on the second sheet of the appendix.

In response to **Question 1**, Health NZ has interpreted this part of your request as seeking the number of Senior Medical Officers (SMOs) who have left employment in each district over the specified period, rather than a breakdown of individual reasons for departure.

Please note the following:

- SMOs are not required to disclose the reason for their departure, and where such information is reported it is not complete or consistently recorded. Accordingly, Health NZ cannot accurately report reasons for leaving across all individual cases.
- The leaver data provided includes both voluntary and involuntary leavers. Involuntary leavers are those reported as leaving due to reasons such as restructure, redundancy, dismissal, death, or health.

Health NZ recognises the critical role of SMO recruitment and retention in workforce stability, as reflected in the Health Workforce Plan and the Health Workforce Implementation Plan.

Recruitment of SMOs is undertaken through a combination of district-led and nationally coordinated activity, including permanent appointments, international recruitment where necessary to maintain service delivery, and the use of locums as an interim measure.

At present, retention measures for SMOs are primarily addressed through collective bargaining with Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS), alongside broader workforce planning initiatives. We remain committed to reaching settlement with the ASMS and continue to engage in good-faith bargaining, with several bargaining dates held in 2026 and further meetings planned. Health NZ values its medical workforce and is focused on achieving sustainable employment arrangements that support continuity of care and improve access to timely healthcare for New Zealanders.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nzOIA@tewhaturora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Sasha Wood
Head of Government Services

