

Hospital Chaplaincy Report 2025

Presented to the Waikato and Taranaki Anglican Synod

Covering Chaplaincy at Waikato and Taranaki Base Hospitals.

INTRODUCTION

Hospital chaplaincy services at Waikato and Taranaki Base Hospitals are provided through **Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa**—formerly known as the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy (IHC). While the legal name remains unchanged, the updated name better reflects the ecumenical and nationally coordinated nature of the ministry.

Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa was established by nine partner Christian denominations, including the Anglican Church, which continues to play a key role in governance through two representatives on the Board. The organisation works in partnership with **Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora** to place professionally trained chaplains in hospitals throughout the country.

Chaplains offer high-quality, holistic spiritual and pastoral care to patients, their whānau, and hospital staff—regardless of faith background. This care can take many forms: from providing prayer, blessings, and sacred rituals, to simply sitting in silence with someone in distress, or helping staff process the emotional weight of their work.

Impact Across the Waikato and Taranaki Diocese

Over the past year, chaplains in hospitals across the Waikato and Taranaki Diocese have provided direct care to **over 6,700 patients, whānau groups, and staff members**. Each interaction represents a moment of listening, comfort, hope, or prayer offered at a time of need.

The reach of this ministry across these two hospitals has been substantial:

Hospital	Patients	Whānau Groups	Staff	Total
Waikato	2,810	512	308	3,630
Taranaki	2,290	464	329	3083
Total	5,100	976	637	6,713

WITH GRATITUDE

The ministry of hospital chaplaincy in Waikato and Taranaki is only possible because of the faithful support of many partners—both spiritual and practical. We give thanks to the Anglican Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki, Bishop Philip Richardson, and local congregations for their ongoing prayers, encouragement, and generous financial support. Your commitment enables us to walk alongside patients, whānau, and staff during times of uncertainty, illness, and vulnerability.

To all who uphold this work in prayer, in financial giving, and in acts of encouragement, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Your faithfulness ensures that Christ-centred pastoral and spiritual care remains available to all who seek it across the Waikato and Taranaki region.

The following report provides a brief overview from both Waikato and Taranaki Hospitals.

WAIKATO HOSPITAL

The past year has again been one of growth and change in our chaplaincy team, and we are deeply thankful for the Anglican Church's ongoing support. Your prayers, financial contributions, and the presence of volunteers and church representatives on our local chaplaincy committee make this ministry possible. Without this partnership, our ability to serve patients, whānau, and staff in times of need would be greatly limited.

Our ministry continues to reach people of all beliefs, with a strong focus for the year being on building relationships with other healthcare professionals. These connections have opened doors for chaplaincy to be more visible across the hospital with an increasing understanding and use of our services, as well as creating opportunities to contribute to conversations at a policy and management level. It is humbling to see the trust placed in us by people from so many different backgrounds when they are most vulnerable.

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen and consolidate our chaplaincy team. We were delighted to welcome seven new Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistants (VCAs) to Waikato Hospital, following a ten-week training programme led by Rev Paul Weeding, with contributions from all Chaplains and some of our experienced Volunteers on a week-by-week basis. This cohort of VCAs are now commencing their year of probationary ward visiting. This year also saw the first VCA training course in Te Kuiti, led by Pastor Brian Ludlow. This condensed, five-week course brought new trainees into the team and extended our volunteer presence to cover Hamilton, Taumarunui, Thames, and Te Kuiti Hospitals, now totalling thirty VCAs across the region.

Our Chaplains have continued to lead and support a variety of initiatives that enrich the hospital community. Rev Heather Major has maintained her work in distributing muffins to whānau on the children's wards, organising Christmas carols, and coordinating Sunday chapel services. She has also facilitated fellowship opportunities for Christian medics, nurses, and allied health professionals, and organised a Saline course for Christian staff. Anglican chaplains Rev Paul Weeding and Rev Heather Major have played a key role in running Sunday chapel services and recruiting additional volunteers to support worship and pastoral care.

This year also brought additional challenges, including the migration of Te Whatu Ora's computer systems. The transition created complications that took more than six months to resolve, and we are especially grateful for Pastor Brian Ludlow's dedication in navigating these issues to ensure our Chaplains could access the systems necessary for patient care. Despite these pressures, the heart of our ministry remains focused on visiting patients, providing spiritual support, and offering prayer and communion services on Sundays, as well as bedside communion whenever requested.

We continue to be thankful for the strong support we receive from Te Whatu Ora Manager Renee Sharp and her team, as well as the regional charge nurse managers who enable our Chaplains to operate effectively across the outlying hospitals. We are especially grateful to the teams at Te Kuiti Hospital for welcoming the first Volunteer Chaplaincy presence there.

Our work is also greatly enhanced by the Friends of Hospital Chaplaincy (FOHC), whose ongoing support has included providing uniform items for Chaplains and locums, shirts for new VCAs, and renewing our Zoom subscription for unlimited virtual meetings. FOHC also hosts fundraising events, such as the choral concert with the St Peter's Cathedral Choir and the Hamilton Community Gospel Choir and supports team events through catering and small practical purchases. These contributions are invaluable in helping us maintain a visible, professional, and effective ministry throughout the Waikato region.

On the national level, members of our team, including Pastor Sonny Poutapu and Pastor Brian Ludlow, continue to be involved in Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa policy-making and planning. We are grateful for the stability and support provided by the national structure, and for the assistance of our Regional Manager, Matiu Best, and HCA National Operations Manager David Hough, which helps us maintain and grow our ministry across the region.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue strengthening the relationships we have built with hospital staff, volunteers, and the wider community. We are also exploring innovative ways to extend our ministry to new areas within the Waikato region. In all we do, we are deeply grateful for the ongoing prayers, encouragement, and partnership of the Anglican Church, which makes this vital work possible.

Ngā mihi nui

The Chaplains of Waikato Hospital

TARANAKI BASE HOSPITAL

Greetings in the name of Jesus. We are grateful for your continued support and for the privilege of serving as Hospital Chaplains in Taranaki.

Our current team consists of Ecumenical Chaplains, Rev. Raymond McKie and Teresa Walton, and Catholic Chaplain, Albert Chow. We are also supported by a dedicated group of volunteers who assist through locum work or as Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistants (VCAs), including two locum chaplains representing the Anglican Diocese in Taranaki. Together, we walk alongside individuals and families who find themselves in hospital due to circumstances beyond their control, covering both Taranaki Base Hospital and Hawera Hospital in South Taranaki.

Over the past year, we have been privileged to be called into many diverse situations with patients, whānau, and staff. Our paid chaplains encounter families in the Emergency Department, Intensive Care Unit, and the mental health ward, offering care, comfort, and spiritual support in times of need. Taranaki has a long and respected tradition of hospital chaplaincy, and we are fortunate to enjoy strong relationships with senior hospital staff, who recognise chaplaincy as a vital and valued service.

Chaplaincy in Taranaki occupies a unique space, often bridging boundaries between the sacred and the secular, the individual and the community, and the emotional and the spiritual. Our role is to support and guide people through a wide range of life experiences, offering a listening ear, reassurance, and spiritual care—always respecting the beliefs and backgrounds of those we serve. While chaplaincy is “available to all, accessed by some, and understood by few,” this highlights both the universal intention of our ministry and the delicate, often unseen ways in which it impacts lives. We exist in this liminal space to provide connection, care, and support at a deeply personal and transcendent level.

Where the hospital focuses on treating people’s physical condition, we seek to attend to who they are—recognising the emotional, spiritual, and relational dimensions of their experience. In all we do, we are sustained by the prayers, encouragement, and practical support of the Anglican Church and local congregations, which allow us to continue this important ministry.

Ngā mihi nui

The Chaplains of Taranaki Base Hospital

The ministry of chaplaincy is always about people and their stories—unique, sacred, and often carried in moments of deep vulnerability. Behind the statistics of visits and encounters are lives marked by resilience, courage, and faith.

Waikato Hospital

At Waikato Hospital, one such encounter was with an elderly man admitted after a stroke. While his leg was slowly regaining mobility, his right arm remained paralysed. As he shared his life story, he recalled fleeing his homeland by boat and the kindness shown to him by a local faith community and charitable organisation upon his arrival in New Zealand. Though his rapid speech made him challenging to follow at times, his faith was unmistakable. He spoke of God's care and protection—on the dangerous voyage to safety, and throughout the struggles of his life—reminding us of the sustaining power of faith even in the midst of suffering.

Another encounter was with a woman living with a rare, progressive autoimmune disease. Over many years of hospitalisations, she has shown extraordinary courage, resilience, and warmth. A devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, she draws strength from her family, as well as from the beauty of creation, where she often experiences God's presence. Unable to attend church because of her illness, she treasures chaplaincy visits for prayer, conversation, and companionship. Whether speaking of her garden or describing the joy of being able to reach the beach independently, she bears witness to a faith that is both simple and inspiring.

Taranaki Hospital

At Taranaki Hospital, chaplains were called to support a young woman struggling with severe mental health challenges. Her family expressed concern that her condition might have a spiritual dimension, and through conversation it became clear that she had a strong connection to her Māori heritage. The chaplains encouraged the whānau to engage with the Māori Health team, who were able to provide culturally appropriate care. In the days that followed, the patient remained under their ongoing support—an example of the importance of chaplaincy in recognising cultural needs and ensuring holistic care.

Another encounter took place when a patient came to a hospital chapel service searching for “something good.” They were recovering from self-inflicted injuries and weighed down by feelings of worthlessness. As they shared their story of domestic violence and childhood neglect, they wept, saying they had never known real love. In that moment, the chaplain was able to assure them of their preciousness in God's sight, to pray with them, and to remind them that they were deeply loved. The patient expressed heartfelt gratitude for being truly seen and cared for—perhaps for the first time.

Stories such as these are at the core of hospital chaplaincy. They show the depth of human struggle and the ways in which hope and faith can break through in unexpected ways. They also remind us of the sacred privilege of chaplains: to listen, to encourage, and to be bearers of God's presence in the midst of life's most difficult moments.