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**For immediate release**

**Additional hospital bed capacity project nears completion**

The blessing of a ward extension at Waitakere Hospital this morning marks a significant milestone in a \$3.682 million initiative designed to meet increased demand for local services and improve patient outcomes.

Work on the Waitakere Additional Medical Capacity project started in November 2016 and is due for completion in April 2017.

The first stage to be finished is an extension of Huia Ward where kaumatua and staff gathered for today's dawn blessing.

The space includes two patient bedrooms, a staff base and a clean utility/meds room - which will be part of an area occupied by the cardiology service when it relocates from its existing location in the Assessment and Diagnostic Unit (ADU) on March 30.

The entire project is designed to enhance and modernise ward space and make an additional 12 medical beds available.

Three single rooms with ensuites are being provided - giving staff greater flexibility to manage patients based on gender, clinical and social needs.

Two negative pressure isolation rooms are also included for infection control.

Increased capacity and the creation of 19 new staffing positions will have an immediate impact on the hospital's ability to treat more people onsite, lessening associated stresses for patients and families.

The number of patients who have transferred from Waitakere to North Shore Hospital for clinical care has decreased since general medicine staff numbers were increased in 2015 and will decrease further with the new development.

"This expansion ensures the people of west Auckland have the services they need closer to home with a focus on timely care and getting people back into their own environments with community support," Waitemata District Health Board Director of Hospital Services Cath Cronin says.

Waitemata DHB CEO Dr Dale Bramley says the completed Waitakere Additional Medical Capacity project will be among a series of major developments that have improved access to health care for the west Auckland community.

“This is yet another example of our investment in the evolution of Waitakere Hospital and the high quality service we provide today, ” he says.

Past initiatives include:

- The opening of a new world-class \$9.8 million Waitakere Hospital Emergency Department in 2016.
- The refurbishment of Waitakere Hospital’s maternity unit in 2015
- The opening of an onsite pharmacy at Waitakere Hospital in 2015
- The establishment of an enhanced acute mental health service based in Waitakere ED.

**Ends**

**Photo Caption:** Waitakere Hospital Chaplain Sione Tu'ungafasi, left, and kaumatua Frank Taipari bless a room in the new Huia Ward extension

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