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New breast service removes travel barriers for women out west

How to get to North Shore Hospital from west Auckland?

An easy question to answer if you own a car and have the means to pay for petrol or alternative transport. But not so simple if you don't.

That's why today's official opening of the Kia Ū Ora BreastScreen NorthWest Clinic at Westgate by Waitematā DHB Deputy Chair Kylie Clegg is welcome news to some of those women who've previously had to travel to the North Shore for a follow-up assessment after their initial mammogram results.

The new, easy-to-access facility brings both services under one roof – removing the cost and burden of a journey that, for some, might be a significant barrier to a potentially lifesaving early diagnosis.

"Swift detection is vital in our battle against breast cancer," Waitematā Executive Director of Community services Tim Wood says. "We know that travel and distance are significant barriers for some of the women who need our care – which is why we've listened to their feedback and provided a combined, convenient screening and assessment service that will help them get diagnosed and on the path to treatment as quickly as possible."

The clinic replaces a screening-only facility that previously ran at full capacity on the grounds of Waitakere Hospital. It is bigger than its predecessor, specifically designed to meet the needs of a fast-growing population and more centrally located to cater for those living in the DHB's north-western reaches.

"The number of women aged between 45 and 69 who are eligible for free screening is expected to increase by 11% to 109,000 by 2030," Mr Wood says. "This clinic will go a long way in helping us meet that demand."

Waitematā DHB is contracted by the Ministry of Health to provide the national BreastScreen Aotearoa programme to its own population as well as the people of Northland.

The DHB opened a newly expanded Kia U Ora diagnostic breast service at North Shore Hospital earlier this year and is also home to the BreastScreen Waitematā Northland Regional centre in Takapuna. A mobile screening clinic is also available.

"Breast cancer accounts for more than 600 deaths across the country each year," Waitematā DHB CEO Dr Dale Bramley says. "This new clinic, combined with additional services across our catchment, will contribute to improved diagnosis and treatment times – helping us make a dramatic difference in the lives of our patients, their families and whānau."

• Free mammograms are available to eligible women aged between 45 and 69 every two years through the BreastScreen Aotearoa programme. Go to www.timetoscreen.nz for more information

Ends.

For further information, contact:

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