



# Labour minimised surgery waiting list size – minister

Hospital waiting lists have been manipulated to mask a growing problem within the health system, Health Minister Tony Ryall told Parliament yesterday.

Ryall said reports from district health boards (DHBs) relating to elective surgery suggested waiting list figures released under the Labour government had been misleading.

“To reduce waiting lists, the number of people receiving elective surgery needs to grow faster than population growth,” he said.

“From when district health boards were set up in 2000-2001, to 2007-2008, the number of patients receiving elective surgery each year on average did

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**Tony Ryall**

not even meet population growth – let alone population ageing.”

Ryall said waiting lists had

been reorganised to hide the numbers and thousands of patients on the lists had been culled.

He had also been advised that some DHBs held people in their individual patient management systems and did not submit the information through to the national booking system.

“They are therefore not officially counted.”

Ryall said on Tuesday that DHBs were heading for a combined deficit of about \$160 million this year.

The Crown Health Financing Agency had told him it expected the deficit to be in excess of \$200m in the 2009/10 financial year.

NZPA