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Reports released on seismic status of Hawke's Bay Hospital's acute services buildings

Two reports, provided to Hawke's Bay DHB's Board this week, from engineering experts, WSP and Kestrel Group, provide reassurance on the seismic safety of Hawke's Bay Hospital buildings as the DHB begins to embark on major redevelopment planning of its regional hospital.

Many of the buildings, which includes the hospital's emergency department, intensive care unit and medical wards were built in the 1950s.

Keriana Brooking, Hawke's Bay DHB Chief Executive said the reports were commissioned because of recent changes to earthquake assessment methods, which would likely increase strengthening standards for hospital buildings in the future.

"Hawke's Bay DHB has carried out comprehensive assessments of its buildings over the past decade, which has led to strengthening work as required to protect the safety of our staff and patients and help us maintain our services in the event of a major earthquake," Mrs Brooking said.

"We are about to embark on a project to complete a site-wide master plan and build a business case to redevelop Hawke's Bay Hospital. It was, therefore timely to reassess our buildings before major planning began," Mrs Brooking said.

The reports, rate the buildings from low to mid-range for strength against an earthquake by today's standards but show the collapse of any buildings is considered very unlikely.

The buildings are low rise with a regular layout and do not contain the types of structural weaknesses that have caused buildings to fail in previous major earthquakes. There are also very few heavy non-structural elements, such as heavy ceilings, which can be significant life safety hazards.

"The reports have provided us with the reassurance we need to continue using these buildings over the next five to 10 years without any major disruptive upgrades, so we can plan for the redevelopment in earnest," Mrs Brooking said.

"This means we can really focus our efforts over the next financial year on developing a site-wide master plan and build a business case for the Ministry of Health to redevelop the hospital," Mrs Brooking said.

The reports also showed that some of the buildings may not be immediately usable following a one in 500-year earthquake and provides recommendations to address this and other risks. The DHB is prioritising and investigating these actions over the 2022/2023 financial year.

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