

Otago Daily Times

TUESDAY, October 22, 2019



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SDHB reaction too slow in urology crisis

MIKE HOULAHAN
Health reporter

ONE third of patients were not treated within acceptable time frames as the Southern District Health Board reacted too slowly to a looming urology crisis, an investigation has found.

A newly released report was instigated by health and disability commissioner Anthony Hill after his office received 38 complaints related to the service within a short period.

It said there had been concerns about urology since at least 2014, but an SDHB-commissioned review did not start until June 2017.

"When the system was unable to meet the demand, the DHB was slow to act in a way that was

Recommendations

- Report recommendations included:
 - Independent evaluation of systems identifying, prioritising and/or urology patients.
 - Audit of management of urology service referrals.
 - Review of mechanisms to monitor wait times.
 - Regular forums between urology staff and management.
 - Service to undergo regular monitoring.
 - Ministry of Health to consider investigating national situation.

(with patients) frequently led to frustration and distress for patients."

The commissioner's report detailed strained relationships between clinicians and management, severely stressed staff, clinicians unwilling to work together, and an inadequate response from management to growing patient demand.

Despite numerous warning signs, it appeared it was not until 2016 that SDHB management fully appreciated the clinical risk the dysfunctional service was posing to patients, Mr Hill said.

Patient A

- Suspected prostate cancer, referred in April, should have been treated within 62 days.
- Told July no surgery scheduled. Complaints, operated on August.
- HDC: Time to treatment almost double target time, compounded by failure to keep patient informed.
- Expert opinion: "The problem here is not one of monitoring, it is the problem of the long wait times."

Patient B

- Urinary tract issues, referred Sept as having high risk of cancer.
- Roady performed April, advanced high-risk cancer diagnosed.
- HDC: SDHB unable to explain reason for delay.
- Expert opinion: "Sadly Patient B is in many ways a victim of the SDHB's inability to get its own house in order."

Patient C

- Referred April 2016, high risk of cancer. Complained over being given a low priority, biopsy done privately.
- Complained to SDHB, department secretary "marched a verbal counter-assault", banged phone down.
- HDC: "I am critical that the information publicly available about the complaints process did not facilitate the making of complaints."
- Expert opinion: "Patient C simply did not trust that he was getting care of an appropriate level in a timely fashion."

robustive and would bring effective, sustainable improvement... the delays in being treated and the poor communication

"Although SDHB organised an external review... that did not occur before the situation had become critical."

Biopsies could take six months

or more from when they were requested, and prostate cancer patients were obliged to wait up to 12 months for their operations.

The commissioner highlighted

four of the 38 complaints, two patients believing their cancers would not have spread had they been treated earlier.

"The Southern District Health

Board failed to ensure that a system was in place that effectively managed patients waiting for urology services," Mr Hill said.

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MISSING OUT • Page 22

Sting catches man after earlier acquittal

ROB KIDD
Court reporter

LESS than three months after being cleared of raping a young girl, a Mosgiel man began grooming a 14-year-old online.

Except she was not the innocent schoolgirl 63-year-old Evan Hedley Smith thought.

It was an undercover police officer — a member of the Online Child Exploitation Across New Zealand team.

Smith will be sentenced on a charge of grooming at the Dunedin District Court today after earlier pleading guilty.

Timeline

- June 2018: Evan Smith is found not guilty on night sex charges against a young girl.
- Sept 2018: Smith starts messaging police officer posing as 14-year-old online.
- Nov 2018: He lets the "girl" he loves her and says her age does not bother him.
- Dec 2018: Arrested by police as he waits for the "girl" to show up at a Dunedin park.

pleaded guilty to the charges, he would have been jailed for nearly a decade.

That brush with the law did not deter Smith.

Once the girl he was grooming explicitly told him she had recently turned 14, he reassured her age was "only a number".

Weeks later, Smith raised the possibility of meeting in person.

When the police officer operating the account told Smith she was coming south to visit her father, his enthusiasm increased.

The defendant continued to declare his love for the girl and admitted he was jealous when she said she had been speaking to boys.

Smith asked if she was a virgin.

She said she was.

She should save herself for him, he suggested.

The pair arranged to meet near a playground in Dunedin on December 20.

Smith said he wanted to have sex with her because he loved her and joked that she should be naked when they met.

When she claimed to be nervous, he went into detail about his first sexual experience.

But when he parked up at the assigned location, at the agreed time, it was not a nervous 14-year-old waiting for him; it was the police.

Grooming carries a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment.

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Arthur Street School receives \$10.9m funding for project



Big smiles... Arthur Street School pupils celebrate after learning their school has received \$10.9 million from the Government for a complete rebuild. PHOTO: STEPHEN JAGGERY

Otago's oldest school will be completely rebuilt

JOHN LEWIS

OTAGO'S oldest school is about to become New Zealand's newest school — if only for a short time — after being given \$10.9 million for a rebuild.

Arthur Street School

principal Kim Blackwood said the board of trustees at the 171-year-old Dunedin school had been working with the Ministry of Education for several years to get the funding, and the complete rebuild was "long overdue".

"To finally get it across the

line, it's incredibly exciting."

She said the build would be completed in two stages so the school could continue to run during construction.

The junior block would be demolished and rebuilt first, and the pupils would be "juggled" around the

remaining part of the school.

Once the new junior block was completed, the pupils would move in and the senior block and staff rooms would be demolished and rebuilt, she said.

"We had some Portacoon [portable, temporary]

buildings brought in earlier in the year and so we'll use those as well.

"It will be a bit of a make-shift really."

Continued Page 4
VIDEO: www.odt.co.nz/tv

WEATHER TODAY
Rain from afternoon, then snow to 400m. Cold SW.

INLAND OTAGO 14°
Showers, more frequent later. SW strengthen evening.

COASTAL OTAGO 13°
Showers, more frequent later. SW strengthen evening.

REPORT #11
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TRAVEL



Bilimungwe manager Alex Steward has a surprise for her guests: the evening sundowner in the Luangwa River, barefoot, with the Chindeni Hills in the background



Assuming the yoga position, the "waterhole bend," this giraffe gets a drink at Bilimungwe, Bushcamp Company, Mfuwe, Zambia.



Bilimungwe Lodge, more rustic comfort home-made in Africa, crafted out of logs, planks, reeds and thatch at Bushcamp Company game lodges, Mfuwe, Zambia



Size matters when two forces meet. Flapping ears tell us to back off and give him space at the South Luangwa National Park, Bushcamp Company, Mfuwe, Zambia

Wide-eyed in Zambia: **Anne Z. Cooke** visits Africa's last great place, Zambia.

An idyllic adventure

ALEX Steward, waiting on the steps of Bilimungwe Lodge, deep in the Zambian bush, likes nothing better than surprising first-time visitors to this wilderness outpost with an introduction to the next-door neighbours.

"Come in, come in, you're just in time," she urges, a twinkle in her eye, leading me to the rear deck of the lodge, one of six Bushcamp Company lodges in the South Luangwa National Park. When she points to the backyard waterhole, I get it.

There they are, two female elephants and a baby, splashing each other, cooling off on this hot October day.

"Junior is a year old now," says Stewart, beaming as the little guy rolls over and over in a bathtub-shaped hole, smacking the water with his trunk and feet, the very image of a 4-year-old let loose in a wading pool.

"And that's Harry," adds Stewart, as a hefty hippopotamus rises up in the water, blinks at the commotion and sinks back down.

"He walks over from the Luangwa River to get away from the other males," she says, tossing back her hair, a thick white mane.

"He likes it here, where he's top dog."

After 26 hours and three flights from California to Zambia, in southern Africa, with a three-hour drive from Bushcamp's Mfuwe Lodge to Bilimungwe, I was dragging. But not for long.

I'd forgotten how it feels on your first day in the bush. Exhilarated and wide-eyed. Over the moon. And then, sobering up, eager but cautious. A safari lodge is a thousand times better than any zoo, but you — not the animals — are the ones in the cage.

"You need to be aware, to look around you, and especially, never go out at night without an escort," says Bushcamp



Nosisi Sibuya, a shaman in Hamilton Village, rolls the knockelones for visitors seeking answers. Near Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, South Africa. PHOTOS: STIVE HAGGERTY/TNS

manager Amy Alderman. The safe way to watch lions is from an off-road vehicle, which the big cats ignore.

When your tracker climbs up on the fender and your guide shifts gears, the adventure begins, a search for the legendary "Big Five" (lions, elephants, rhinos, hippos and buffalo), and the "Lesser Eleven": hyenas, zebras, impalas, bushbucks, giraffe, wildebeest, rhinos, wild dogs, crocodiles, civets and geese.

Why this trip, our fourth to the region? Steve, my husband, shored me a South African Airways ticket sale online, and I said it was too good to pass up. And we had a plan.

Fly from Washington to Johannesburg, then north to Lusaka and Mfuwe, transfer to Mfuwe Lodge, then to Bilimungwe and later to Chamilandu. Next, fly south to Livingston for a couple of days at the Islands of Siankaba, the riverside resort in the Zambezi River.

Finally, a flight to Skukuza, in



Finding gold... Expert trackers, Lazarus and Louis, find a pride of lions sleeping off dinner during a drive from Earth Camp Lodge in Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, South Africa.

South Africa, for a visit to Earth Lodge and Bush Lodge, in the 64,750ha Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, on the border of Kruger National Park. Sixteen days, five game-lodge destinations, and none of them alike.

I picked Bilimungwe and Chamilandu for the location, in the wilderness and off the grid. With rustic cabins, six to eight guests, friendly staff, first-class guides and a dedication to wildlife preservation, they sounded perfect.

Built of logs, planks, reeds and thatching, the cabins were a work of art. And with striped pillows, African colours, flush toilet, running water, screens and a single solar-powered nightlight, I felt right at home. But the lodges weren't identical.

Bilimungwe looked over a waterhole; Chamilandu had a river view and a "hide" above an elephant path. Chamilandu's dinners were served by the river, at Bilimungwe we ate on the deck by candlelight, staring

wine and hashing over the day's surprises.

The lions that killed and ate the buffalo, the bush babies in the mahogany tree and the discovery — to our mutual astonishment — that our fellow guests, a couple from England, live next door to my English cousins.

Manda Chisanga, our guide, the award-winning naturalist and a keen-eyed tracker, was both tireless and professional. "Did you hear that?" he asked.

"It's an eagle owl. He's on that tree branch, there, no, to the left. And over there, the grass is moving but there's no wind tonight. Do you see the leopard?"

We bonded when I told him I drove a 48-year old car with a dented bumper, and unbelievably, he cracked a smile, then broke down laughing.

"No, you don't really. Do you? That's too funny," he said, shaking his head, chortling just as we spotted a pair of hyenas.

Steve picked the next destination, the Islands of Siankaba, on an island in the estuary of the Zambezi, where the river is wide and shallow. Spectacular views from the lodge take it all in, from the trees in the foreground to Zimbabwe, on the river's far side.

The deck, with tables and chairs, Dower beds and a fountain, was the gathering place. Our bedroom, one of seven tented cabins connected by swinging bridges, hung to the bank above the high water mark.

Sheeping late we relaxed, swam in the pool, took a sunset cruise, joined an off-island picnic and got into a mokoro (canoe) for a guided ride, launched from the deck. Dinner times were especially busy; the restaurant has a local following.

With Most-oa-Tunya National Park next door, game drives were available. But we passed them up to spend a day with a young, university-educated Zambian couple, Bill and Susan

(not their real names).

Comparing cultures, we played "straight music funny man", trading jokes about housing prices, the cost of tax, favourite vegetables, names for babies, strange wedding ceremonies and the number of cows it takes to buy a bride.

Comedian Trevor Noah, a South African native, would have fitted right in.

We spent our last week in South Africa at two very different safari lodges, the starkly minimalist Earth Lodge and its partner, Bush Camp, a family-friendly resort, both in the Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve.

Despite a day lost to rain, we didn't miss a drive, bouncing over the hills in comfortable vehicles, with rain gear on board and maps of new territory to explore. When our guide and tracker, Lazarus Mahore and Louis Mkamati, spotted paw prints in the dirt, they drove over every bush until they found the lions, asleep in the grass.

But the lodges themselves

If you go

Planning: There are no African safaris that you can't afford. Tent camping and 25-person tours, favoured by students and young couples, are cheap and fun. High-priced lodges cool more because, well, they offer more, from personal airport transfers to private cabins, comfortable beds, meals, beverages, game drives, off-site tours and even laundry service. Staying: See the Bushcamp Company at www.bushcampcompany.com; the Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge at www.sabisabi.com; and the Islands of Siankaba at www.siankaba.net. These and similar safari lodge websites provide photos, maps and descriptions of lodging, meals, wildlife, game drives and climate. All-inclusive safari lodge rates per person, per night, range from \$825-\$2,150 or more.

couldn't have been more different. Channelling the Neanderthals, Earth Lodge's 13 luxury suites were caves, richly decorated dugouts in the side of a hill, invisible from the top or sides. We sat in our plunge pool outside the front windows and watched the impala graze in complete privacy.

The lounges, tidy rock gardens, weathered tree trunks, bar, wine cellar and dining room echoed the motif, fresh and inviting but Spartan. Even the dinner guests fit the mood, eating at the next table, alone and in silence.

In contrast, Bush Camp, with 25 luxury suites, popped with energy. Game drives mattered, but as part of the larger experience. The high school kids in short-shorts, celebrating a birthday, said it best.

"First person to see a rhino gets the prize."

The food, served buffet-style on a half-dozen tables hooped high, ran from macaroni, fish and pasta to salads, fruit, vegetables, breads and cookies, while the guests, sipping wherever there was space, mingled and exchanged names.

You could leave your children in the Children's Centre, tour Hamilton Village or visit two nearby schools, both supported by the game lodges. Or you could meet village elder Nosisi Sibuya, a Shangaan shaman. Invited into her rondavel, I sat down, crossed my legs, she rolled the knockelones and then she spoke, the words I'd hoped to hear: "We will meet again some time." — TNS

Writer Anne Z. Cooke, who drives a 48-year-old car, spends her extra cash buying

DEAL of the week

Mediterranean Flavors

Adventure is knocking.

COSMOS.

SAVE