

## Appraisal Report

**Public Office:** *Canterbury District Health Board*  
**Scope:** *Patient records of Sunnyside Hospital c.1860-c.1973*  
**Disposal Type:** *One-off. Records predating 1920 are covered by an existing disposal schedule*  
**File Ref:** 2010/0479

### **Appraisal Circumstances:**

While Archives New Zealand has held casebooks and registers from Sunnyside Lunatic Asylum/Mental Hospital/Psychiatric Hospital for many years, the individual patient files that complemented and then replaced the casebooks were retained by the health authorities, latterly in commercial storage. Longstanding concerns about the appropriateness of this material being held in storage recently resulted in the physical transfer of custody of the early part of this series to Archives New Zealand Christchurch Office.

Under the provisions of section 8 of the District Health Board General Disposal Authority (DA262) pre-1920 patient files should be transferred to Archives New Zealand; files dating between 1920 and 1945 require appraisal; and files after 1945 may be destroyed by the DHB 20 years after last contact with the patient, or discharged.

The files of patients of other psychiatric institutions discharged prior to c. 1973 (when responsibility for the institutions devolved to the local health boards) had already been transferred to Archives New Zealand prior to the promulgation of DA262, and I had been trying to secure the transfer of a similar range of records from Sunnyside for many years. Patients commonly shifted between psychiatric institutions and it would be anomalous for Sunnyside's files not to be retained for the same period.

I am not happy about the conditions under which the records are stored at present and am seeking authority to have all the patient files up to 1973 transferred immediately to the Christchurch Office of Archives New Zealand. This would retain the integrity of this heavily used series of records nationally. The agency supports this approach.

### **Description:**

The records comprise the individual patient files created by Sunnyside Hospital c.1860 to c.1973.

Prior to c. 1917 the records contained only the statutory documents and other papers relating to the admission of the patient, while the case notes were contained in separate casebooks. After casebooks ceased to be kept, the file contained all information, medical or administrative or legal, about the patient.

The quantity of material is approximately 50 linear metres.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the patient records of Sunnyside Hospital 1860-1973 be retained as public archives and transferred immediately to Archives New Zealand's Christchurch Office because of their proven research value and relationship to other archives already held by Archives New Zealand nationally.

[Name Removed]