



Weekend Waiting List Initiative

Progress Report

JULY 2025



Introduction



The Weekend Waiting List Initiative (WWLI) was established in 2011 to reduce waiting times for elective (day-case) paediatric surgeries by paying for surgical staff to work on Saturdays. The initiative is currently implemented at Tygerberg Hospital and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, which manage the majority of paediatric surgical procedures in the region. Both facilities face persistent backlogs in day-case surgeries, often caused by emergency cases, complex procedures, staffing limitations, and a shortage of weekday theatre slots.

In 2025, we are pleased to announce the expansion of the WWLI to Mitchell's Plain District Hospital, where it will support an additional three paediatric ENT theatre lists per month, ensuring that more children receive the care they need.

This report highlights the progress made between January and June 2025, reflecting the collective impact of the WWLI across all participating sites.

2500

To date, the WWLI has helped reduce surgical backlogs by enabling over 2 500 children to access essential procedures without prolonged delays.



Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH)

Now in its **14th year** participating in the Weekend Waiting List Initiative, RCWMCH continues to run **four Saturday lists each month**. As a specialist paediatric facility, it handles a broad and often complex range of surgeries, including urology, ENT, audiology, dentistry, plastic surgery, burns, radiology, and general paediatric surgery.

14

years of changing
children's lives



Tygerberg Hospital (TBH)

Now in its **third year** of implementing the Weekend Waiting List Initiative, Tygerberg Hospital has expanded the programme **from three lists per month to include four or five additional Saturday theatre lists per month**. Paediatric specialities covered include urology, ophthalmology, neurology, ENT, and general paediatric surgery. At least one ENT list per month includes patients from the Khayelitsha District Hospital ENT waiting list, helping to address regional backlogs.



Mitchell's Plain District Hospital (MPH)

In 2025, the WWLI expanded to include Mitchell's Plain District Hospital (MPH). A weekly ENT clinic was already being conducted at MPH, and RCWMCH surgeons perform tonsil and adenoid (adenotonsillectomy) surgeries once a month as part of this outreach.

While the anaesthetic and nursing teams at MPH remain available to perform adenotonsillectomy surgeries on the other three Thursdays of the month, the two ENT surgeons from RCWMCH do not have the capacity to absorb additional theatre time beyond their existing weekly clinic commitments.

To help address this, the Trust has begun supporting **three additional half-day paediatric ENT theatre lists per month** at MPDH starting in May 2025. These surgeries are performed during the week using existing anaesthetic and nursing staff on shift, with CHT funding only covering the cost of the additional ENT surgeon.



“We currently have a waiting list of 354 patients awaiting adenotonsillectomy surgery, meaning that patients being seen now will likely wait until next year for their operation. These additional weekly lists go a long way toward helping reduce the surgical burden and improve timely access to care.” **Dr Kate Wright, Paediatric ENT surgeon at RCWMCH and MPH**

Mr. Accident and the Long Road to Surgery

It's a cold winter morning at Mitchell's Plain Hospital (MPH). Mogamat is wrapped up tightly in a fluffy blanket. He peeks out shyly when anyone speaks to him. He's a slight, pale child with soft eyes. His mom, Waaghida, squeezes him tight as she tells his story.

The problem started when he was about two years old. "In the beginning, he would get sick all the time," Waaghida says. She took him to the clinic several times before they decided to try a private doctor. "The doctor found that his tonsils were huge for his age, so when they get infected, it affects his breathing. They also found that he has a tongue tie, which they will fix today." It has been a long wait.

They were referred to MPH, but time and again, their appointments were cancelled because there was no ENT available. The delay meant that Mogamat had to endure multiple rounds of antibiotics, which had to be carefully selected to prevent resistance. Finally, in June 2025, Waaghida got an appointment, and his surgery was scheduled for the following month with a surgeon from the RCWMCH, funded by the WWL.

By then, Mogamat had wriggled his way out of the blanket and started exploring the playroom. "He's a busy bee," Waaghida laughs. "I call him Mr. Accident because he always gets hurt when he gets up to nonsense." Within minutes, and after only one small mishap involving a pile of chairs, Mogamat was hard at work "fixing" the play kitchen with blocks as his imaginary tools. "His dad is a carpenter," Waaghida explains, laughing.

Mogamat's tongue tie makes chewing difficult. Combined with the constant pain caused by his swollen tonsils and adenoids, he is nervous about swallowing. "Because he wasn't eating, I had to keep him on milk," Waaghida says, her voice tinged with concern. "I stopped that at the beginning of this year to see if he would eat. He likes peanut butter and bread, or noodles, but he only eats one meal a day. He's so tiny!"

His illness has affected the whole family. Waaghida had to quit her job because she was grappling with a lack of sleep and was afraid to leave her little one alone. "He travels with me everywhere, even when I drop off and fetch my two older children from school."



Mr. Accident and the Long Road to Surgery

Now, the day of the surgery has finally arrived. Waaghida is relieved, but also nervous about how Mogamat will cope. “I had the same problem with my daughter, but she was eight when she had her surgery. I’m scared because he’s so young. And if he’s sick, he doesn’t eat at all, so I’m worried he won’t eat anything after this.” She looks over at him. “He’s turning five in two weeks. I hope he’ll be recovered by then.”

Children on surgical waitlists may not be in immediate danger, but their childhoods are on hold. Many wait up to two years, living in pain or struggling with symptoms that slow their development and harm their long-term health. The Weekend Waiting List makes more surgeries possible. Every operation completed reduces the provincial backlog and provides each child with the care they need. With your support, we can ease pain, restore childhoods, and provide every child with the healthy future they deserve.



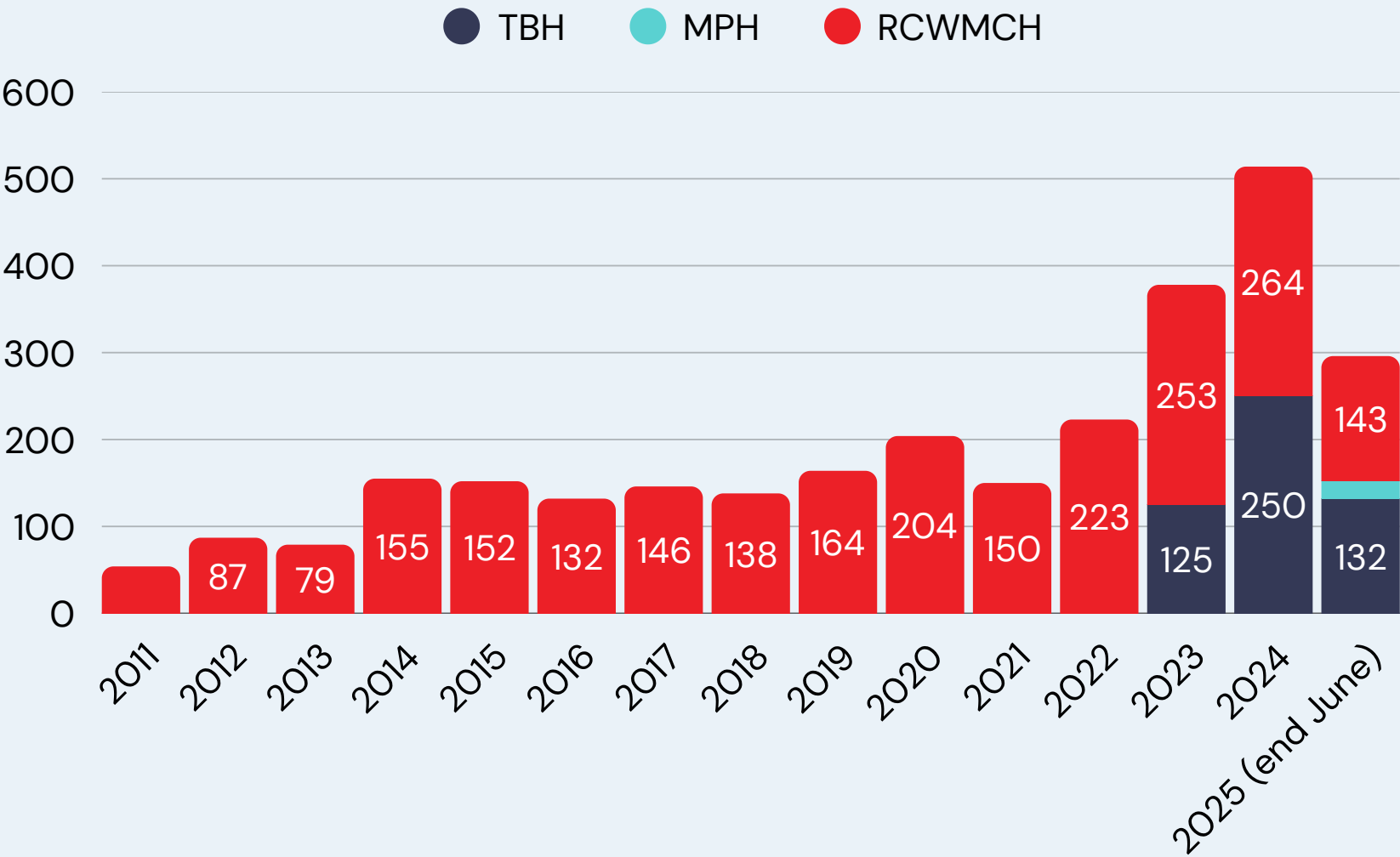
Progress Report

296

2025 WWLI is progressing as planned across all sites, with 296 children already receiving much-needed surgical care.

	Planned lists 2025	Lists completed 2025	Number of beneficiaries 2025
RCWMCH (Started 17 Feb)	42	19	143
TBH (Started 13 Jan)	48	24	132
Mitchell's Plain (Started 1 May)	25	4	21

Progress Report



2872

Total WWLI beneficiaries

2344

Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital

507

Tygerberg Hospital

21

Mitchell's Plain Hospital

Financial Report

	2025 Budget	Expenditure (Jan – Jun 2025)
BUDGET	EXPENDITURE YEAR 1	2024
Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital	R1 388 352	R669 370
RCWMCH		
Tygerberg Hospital	R1 699 704	R707 481
TPH		
Mitchell’s Plain Hospital (launched May 2025)	R63 636	R1 389 730
MPH		
TOTAL		-
Total	R3 151 692	R1 389 730

Note: Budgeted Cost per list are based on potential maximum staffing requirements. In reality, these vary from week to week depending on type of surgeries performed.



THANK YOU!

THANK YOU FOR HELPING
THESE CHILDREN GET BACK
TO BEING CHILDREN

