

Priorities for Health

NZCPHM PRIORITIES FOR HEALTH | ELECTION 2026 AND BEYOND



This document presents the College's priorities for the next Government, building on our original [Health for Everyone | Ō Tātou Hauora](#) framework.

Our Position

The College calls on all political parties to put prevention, equity and long-term wellbeing at the centre of their policies. Aotearoa New Zealand cannot treat its way out of preventable illness. The next Government must invest earlier, act upstream, and build a public health system that keeps people well, reduces inequities and protects future generations.

Why Prevention Matters

Good health is built before people need healthcare. It depends on things such as safe housing, quality education, decent incomes, healthy food, clean air and water, and strong communities.

Aotearoa New Zealand faces growing health challenges. Continuing to focus mainly on treating illness after it occurs is not sustainable or affordable. Preventable disease and injury make up nearly 40% of health loss, yet prevention, population and public health services receive only 2–9% of Vote Health.

Increased investment in prevention is one of the smartest investments governments can make. Strong public health policies reduce pressure on hospitals and general practice, strengthen communities, improve productivity, and deliver economic returns of over \$14 for every \$1 invested.

PRIORITY ONE | Ensure healthy environments and decisive climate action

Healthy people depend on healthy environments. Climate change is the greatest long-term threat to population health, while unsafe housing, poor air quality, contaminated waterways and emerging infectious diseases increase health risks and inequities. Reducing environmental harm can create healthier, more resilient communities.

ACTION AREA	WHAT THIS MEANS
Accelerate Climate Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through ambitious, evidence-based mitigation, and ensure health and equity are at the centre of climate adaptation.• Incorporate health co-benefits across transport, housing and energy in climate decisions and investment.
Create Healthier Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use Health in All Policies in urban planning and invest in walking, cycling and public transport.• Improve air and freshwater quality and protect drinking water.• Accelerate delivery of healthy, climate-resilient housing and healthier built environments.



Strengthen Health Protection

- Strengthen pandemic preparedness and public health emergency capability.
- Strengthen infection prevention and control, including improving indoor air quality, building genomic capacity, and expanding immunisation programmes.
- Update the Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan using a One Health approach.

PRIORITY TWO | Improve health and wellbeing across the life course

Health begins before birth and continues throughout life. Reducing inequities requires action on the social determinants of health alongside accessible, culturally safe healthcare. A life-course approach improves health and reduces costs.

ACTION AREA	WHAT THIS MEANS
Deliver Equitable Health Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi and embed Health in All Policies across government.• Reduce inequities experienced by Māori, Pacific peoples and other priority populations such as disabled and rural communities.• Strengthen Māori and Pacific health leadership and workforce development.
Give Every Child and Whānau the Best Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in maternal, infant and early childhood health and restore high childhood immunisation coverage.• Reduce child poverty and improve housing, nutrition and food security.• Strengthen Well Child Tamariki Ora and school health services.
Improve Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase investment in prevention and early intervention, addressing the determinants of mental wellbeing and addiction.• Expand community-based mental health and addiction services, including kaupapa Māori and Pacific-led services.• Improve mental health surveillance and research.
Support Healthy Ageing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in prevention throughout adulthood and promote physical activity, healthy nutrition and social connection.• Improve dementia prevention and healthy brain ageing and create age-friendly communities.• Strengthen integrated health and social care for older people.

PRIORITY THREE | Prevent disease by addressing the commercial determinants of health

Many preventable illnesses are driven by environments that promote unhealthy products. Tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food impose major health, social and economic costs. Government action can make healthy choices easier and reduce harm.

ACTION AREA	WHAT THIS MEANS
Finish the Job on Tobacco	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restore progress towards Smokefree Aotearoa and continue evidence-based tobacco control.
Reduce Alcohol Harms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce alcohol availability and affordability, and restrict marketing and promotion.• Support stronger community decision-making.• Improve monitoring of alcohol-related harm.



Create Healthier Food Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict marketing of unhealthy food to children. • Improve food security, healthy school food environments and population nutrition. • Strengthen policies to reduce obesity and diet-related disease, including a national food strategy and Nutrition Security Action Plan.
Create a Level Playing Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulate lobbying, manage conflicts of interest and strengthen transparency in legislation and public policy making.

PRIORITY FOUR | Build resilient public health services to protect communities

Public health services protect communities through prevention, health protection, surveillance, health promotion and emergency preparedness. Cross-party support for sustained investment in public health infrastructure, workforce and capability is essential.

ACTION AREA	WHAT THIS MEANS
Invest in Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek and maintain long-term cross-party commitment to prevention. • Increase investment in public health and prevention programmes, and commit to a minimum level of Vote Health funding set over several years. • Evaluate public health programmes for effectiveness and to improve delivery.
Build the Public Health Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a long-term strategy for the public health workforce and infrastructure, with advice from independent experts. • Expand specialist public health medicine training. • Strengthen Māori and Pacific workforce development and invest in epidemiology, health protection and health promotion capability.
Improve Health Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national health literacy strategy and embed health literacy across health services. • Improve culturally responsive communication. • Support communities to access understandable, trustworthy health information.
Address Misinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national strategy to counter health misinformation and disinformation. • Strengthen trusted public health communications and partner with communities and trusted leaders. • Improve digital and media literacy.
Use Technology Responsibly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in modern public health data infrastructure and strengthen disease surveillance. • Use artificial intelligence safely, ethically and transparently. • Protect privacy and Māori data sovereignty, and ensure digital innovation improves equity.

Further Information

This publication provides a summary of the College's public health priorities. It is intended to support conversations about the long-term public health actions needed to create a healthier Aotearoa New Zealand. For the evidence underpinning these recommendations, refer to [Health for Everyone | Ō Tātou Hauora \(2023\)](#) and the [NZCPHM suite of policy statements](#).

