



30 January 2019

**Submission to Finance and Expenditure Select Committee:
Budget Policy Statement 2019**

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine thanks the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee for the opportunity to make a submission on the Budget Policy Statement 2019 (the Budget).ⁱ

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) is the professional body representing the medical specialty of public health medicine in New Zealand. We have 236 members, all of whom are medical doctors, including 185 fully qualified Public Health Medicine Specialists with the majority of the remainder being registrars training in the specialty of public health medicine.

Public Health Medicine is the branch of medicine concerned with the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. The NZCPHM partners and works to achieve health gain and equity for our population, reducing inequalities across socioeconomic and cultural groups, and promoting environments in which everyone can be healthy.

Position

1. The NZCPHM recognises the significance of a shift in measurement by the Treasury from a focus on fiscal and economic variables alone, to a focus on the development of intergenerational wellbeing. We strongly support this approach, and believe it is a step in a direction that will ensure better health and wellbeing for all in New Zealand.
2. We congratulate the Treasury on the development of a revised Budget Process that solidly embeds the attainment of wellbeing goals at the core of the budget allocation process. This is a strategic approach, which moves beyond the simple measuring narrow, conventional fiscal measures.
3. Furthermore, we agree that focussing on economic growth alone can be counterproductive and associated with poor outcomes such as greater inequities and environmental degradation. Economic growth should not be viewed as the sole measure of a country's success; and the fair distribution of health, well-being and environmental and social sustainability are equally important goals.¹
4. We support the five budget priorities identified for Budget 2019:

ⁱ https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/make-a-submission/document/52SCFE_SCF_FINS_82578/budget-policy-statement-2019

- a. Creating opportunities for productive businesses, regions, iwi and others to transition to a sustainable and low-emissions economy. We agree this is a high priority: We recognise climate change as a serious threat to public health and wellbeing and believe that urgent action to address current emissions and unsustainable practice is necessary. In New Zealand, Māori, Pacific, vulnerable, and lower socioeconomic populations are at disproportionate risk of health impacts from climate change, therefore climate change also has serious implications for health equity in New Zealand. Our policy statement on Climate Change, and our identified Priority Actions for Climate Health outline this position.^{2,3}
 - b. Supporting a thriving nation in the digital age through innovation, social and economic activities.
 - c. Lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities. We agree that this is a high priority: Disparities in the standards of living between Māori or Pacific and non-Māori or non-Pacific people in New Zealand have led to compelling health inequities which are pervasive and persist over the course of the lifespan.^{1,4} Any focus on wellbeing must put at its core the achievement of equity in wellbeing and health.
 - d. Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing, including addressing family violence. We agree this is a high priority: Childhood poverty has significant effects on health, both in the short-term and the long-term.⁵ To attain high levels of wellbeing for the population and reduce the intergenerational effects of poverty, a focus on reducing child poverty is important.
 - e. Supporting mental wellbeing for all New Zealanders, with a special focus on under 24-year-olds. We agree this is a high priority: We recognise the huge burden of disease from serious mental illness in New Zealand, and the importance of developing an approach that focusses on prevention and on the socio-economic determinants of mental wellbeing and mental ill health.⁶
5. In addition to the five areas identified above however, we also support a strong focus on housing. As pointed out in the Wellbeing Outlook analysis, there is strong correlation between poor housing conditions and poor health and living in poor housing conditions is most likely for Māori and Pacific people and for those living in poverty.⁷
 6. We also note the high congruence of the areas identified above and the NZCPHM's own identified priority actions for health in New Zealand.⁸
 7. We agree with the Budget Policy Statement's acknowledgement of the complexity and interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental factors, and their impacts on health and wellbeing. Health is a key determinant of wellbeing, but this relationship is bidirectional – wellbeing also impacts on health. Many of the societal determinants of health (the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including factors such as indigenous status, early life conditions, disability status, education, employment / unemployment and working conditions, food security, gender, health care services, housing,

income, ethnic differences, social position and social exclusion) are also determinants of wellbeing. Thus, as most of the social determinants of health lie outside the health sector, inter-sectoral and whole-of-government approaches to addressing the social determinants of health are required.

8. The NZCPHM is pleased to see the use of the Livings Standards Framework (LSF), on which the Treasury wellbeing approach is based, and supports in general the LSF approach.
9. The NZCPHM notes that both the Budget Policy Statement and LSF/wellness approach accord with our own forthcoming Public Health as an Investment policy,⁹ and with the New Zealand Medical Association's position statement on Health as an Investment^{10,11} (which the NZCPHM has endorsed).
10. However, we also note that the LSF, although highly laudable, started with, and in the past simply largely adapted, the OECD 2013 How's Life?/Better Life model, to New Zealand; this is well-described in Conal Smith's summary of the LSF's provenance.¹²

Allied to its sourcing offshore, we have therefore identified the following key appreciable concern with the LSF that we believe needs prompt redress: that the LSF needs to better express **Te Ao Māori** perspectives, **children's wellbeing** and **New Zealand cultural identity**.

 - a. We believe that LSF should explicitly incorporate Te Ao Māori perspectives. To achieve this, strong partnerships with Māori in the further development of this framework is essential. We encourage the LSF process to keep building on the work of the Tax Working Group on exploring Te Ao Māori perspectives.¹³
 - b. In terms of Te Ao Māori perspectives, we note for instance that wairua/spirituality was/is noticeably lacking from the OECD framework.
 - c. The LSF might benefit from eg. incorporating some of the life satisfaction variables in Statistics NZ's Te Kupenga survey.¹⁴
 - d. Although child wellbeing is identified as a priority for Budget 2019, we believe that this element should also be given more prominence in the Living Standards Framework itself.
11. Finally, we also support the New Zealand Medical Association's submission on the Budget Policy Statement.¹⁵

The NZCPHM is happy to provide further clarification on any matter covered in this submission.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Felicity Dumble, President, NZCPHM

References

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- ¹¹ Metcalfe S, Gunasekara S, Baddock K, Clarke L, for the New Zealand Medical Association. Time for healthy investment [Editorial]. N Z Med J. 2017;130(1464):7-10. (<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2017/vol-130-no-1464-27-october-2017/7390>)
- ¹² Smith C. Treasury Living Standards Dashboard: monitoring intergenerational wellbeing. Wellington: Kōtātā Insight, for Treasury, 2018. (<https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-06/smith-living-standards-dashboard-jun18.pdf>)
- ¹³ New Zealand Treasury. Discussion paper 18/11: He Ara Waiora / A Pathway Towards Wellbeing; Exploring Te Ao Māori Perspectives on the Living Standards Framework for the Tax Working Group. NZ Treasury: Wellington, 2018 (<https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-09/dp18-11.pdf>)
- ¹⁴ Statistics New Zealand. Te Kupenga (survey of Māori wellbeing). http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/maori/te-kupenga.aspx (2013 at <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/~media/Statistics/browse-categories/people-and-communities/maori/te-kupenga/the-determinants-of-life-satisfaction-for-maori-2013/life-satisfaction-maori.pdf>, with the 2018 repeat survey's results pending)
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