



06/08/2023

Attn: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Re: Critical Infrastructure Phase 1 Consultation

Tēnā koe,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer feedback and opinion on Phase 1 of the consultation on enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure in Aotearoa. We acknowledge and are pleased to note that this is the first in a series of opportunities to inform the country's response.

OraTaiao: NZ Climate and Health Council would like to make the following recommendations. These are informed by the discussion document for this consultation, and our submissions on the recent National Adaptation Plan (2022)¹ and Pae Ora(Healthy Futures) Bill (2021)² given the significant overlap. Climate change is not the only threat to our critical infrastructure, but its effects will be significant even if rapid global mitigation is undertaken. It also compounds and exacerbates other infrastructure risks such as due to coastal erosion and flooding, and as the greatest public health risk of the 21st century, will increase the pressures on our public health system. Our response to climate change gives the opportunity for major public health and equity gains, and any adaptation planning for climate change and infrastructure resilience must take every opportunity to realise the maximum decarbonisation and health benefits.

At this stage in the consultation process, we wish to make the following points:

- 1: **Aotearoa's approach to enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure must be fully enmeshed in our mitigation efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.** OraTaiao's main criticism of the National Adaptation Plan (2022) was that it failed in this respect, with adaptation planning seemingly siloed from mitigation. Opportunities exist throughout government departments for a synergised approach- an example would be in urban and suburban transport, where a resilient transport system is one that prioritises active and public transport and offers people actual transport choices, rather than one that facilitates private car use. Cross-department work will be essential to achieve this
- 2: Similarly, critical infrastructure protection and enhancement, if designed well, can offer **significant health gains** through developing resilient active and public transport systems, enhancing the "health" of buildings, and protecting food production. We strongly recommend public health involvement in any governmental critical infrastructure planning in order to realise this.

¹ https://www.orataiao.org.nz/submission_on_the_draft_national_adaptation_plan

² https://www.orataiao.org.nz/submission_on_pae_ora_healthy_futures_bill

- 3: The health system deserves particular attention. We strongly recommend any critical infrastructure planning **gives effect to Te Pae Tata Interim Health Plan (2022)³ with particular attention to priority action 6g:** “Implement a climate sustainability and response plan across the health sector”
- 4: **Primary care: To date primary care has been sidelined** in the health sector reforms, climate change adaptation planning and our climate change mitigation plans. This is an area where **increased attention must be focussed as a matter of priority.** The impact of flooding in Northland and Tairāwhiti on primary healthcare delivery were profound and long-lasting. A resilient primary healthcare system will require primary health to be properly embedded within any resilience planning. There has been a tendency to view telehealth as a panacea for problems within the primary health system. However, telehealth is best viewed as an adjunct to the most important aspect of primary healthcare⁴, and the aspect which has been repeatedly show to have major health benefits, especially for marginalised groups- an enduring and ongoing relationship with a single primary health provider⁵⁶. In many ways, this reflects that the workforce is the most critical piece of “infrastructure” in primary care, and the health sector in general, and that all resilience planning must have this human factor at its heart.

We look forward to contributing again to this ongoing consultation process.



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³ <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/whats-happening/what-to-expect/nz-health-plan/>

⁴ RNZCGP (2017) Telehealth and technology-based health services in primary care. Available at: <https://www.rnzcgp.org.nz/gpdocs/New-website/Advocacy/Position-Statements/Telehealth-and-technology-based-health-services-in-primary-care-updated-....pdf>

⁵ Kelley, J.M. et al (2014) “The influence of the patient-clinician relationship on healthcare outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials.” *PLoS One*. 9(4):e94207. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0094207

⁶ Kang, M et al (2020) “The relationship between having a regular general practitioner (GP) and the experience of healthcare barriers: a cross-sectional study among young people in NSW, Australia, with oversampling from marginalised groups”. *BMC Fam Pract*. 2020; 21: 220. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7592545/>

About OraTaiao OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council is an organisation calling for urgent, fair, and Tiriti-based climate action in Aotearoa; we recognise the important co-benefits to health, well-being and fairness from strong and well-designed mitigative policies. Our vision is Āhuarangi Ora, Tangata Ora, 'Healthy Climate, Healthy People'

