OraTaiao: Aotearoa NZ Climate and Health Council

Submission on Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill

to Health Committee

18-08-2025

Contact: Dr Summer Wright
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Summary of OraTaiao's position

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. OraTaiao wishes to be heard in support of this written submission.

OraTaiao opposes the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill. We oppose the submission on the basis that it narrows healthcare solely to service provision for ill-health, rather than optimisation of health and wellbeing, by doing the following:

- Repeals health sector principles, which will weaken the health sector, cause further health inequities especially for Māori, and worsen climate change and the health sector's vulnerability to it by removing the responsibility of the health sector to address climate change and other upstream determinants of health
- Further disables Te Tiriti o Waitangi for the health sector
- Weakens Māori health services, devalues health workers overall, and is internally contradictory where it promises to improve health outcomes, yet the proposed amendments will only weaken health service provision and health outcomes.

We recommend that the Health Sector Principles remain, that Te Tiriti o Waitangi retain its meaning and application as in the 2022 Act, Te Mauri o Rongo not be repealed, and that Iwi-Māori partnership boards retain service delivery functions.

Nā,
Dr Summer Wright
Convenor, OraTaiao: Aotearoa NZ Climate & Health Council

About

OraTaiao: Aotearoa New Zealand Climate and Health Council (OraTaiao) is an incorporated society representing over 1,000 health professionals and organisations. We see planetary health as requisite to human wellbeing and have championed equitable and regenerative climate action for 15 years. Te Tiriti o Waitangi (te Tiriti) is the basis of health equity and environmental protection in Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, OraTaiao advocates for climate and environmental action, underpinned by te Tiriti, as a way to protect and enhance the health of people and the planet.

About Pae Ora

The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill 2022 (henceforth, Pae Ora):

- Pae Ora responded to Wai 2575 Waitangi Tribunal Report into Māori health, which found successive Governments had failed to address Māori health inequities and set out recommendations for addressing Māori health equity
- Established Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora
- Introduced health sector principles, including equity, Māori health equity, and the responsibility of the health sector to address climate change
- Established formal recognition of Iwi-Māori partnership boards (IMPBs)
- Put legal responsibility on Te Whatū Ora to address health equity

Our position on the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill 2025

The stated goals of the Bill are to:

- Amend the purpose, objectives, and functions of Te Whatū Ora Health New Zealand (Te Whatū Ora Health NZ). The bill would amend the objectives of Te Whatū Ora Health NZ, add a new purpose to the Act, and would repeal the health sector principles and the Te Mauri o Rongo, the New Zealand Health Charter.
- Increase focus on infrastructure
- Change the roles and responsibilities of Iwi Māori in relation to the delivery of health services

- Strengthen governance, strategic direction setting, planning, and monitoring arrangements.

Anticipated outcomes of the Bill and our position:

We are in opposition to many of the proposed changes. The original aims of Pae Ora will be fundamentally undermined by the removal of the Health Sector Principles, which would prevent proper incorporation of preventative health care and the wider determinants of health into health planning and health care delivery. The effect of the bill will be to narrow healthcare in Aotearoa solely to service provision for ill-health, rather than optimisation of health and wellbeing. It takes particular aim at weakening provisions for Māori health improvement, building on other decisions the government has taken over the last 2 years e.g., a previous amendment to Pae Ora which dismantled Te Aka Whai Ora. The single most consistent thread throughout government decisions has been an anti-Māori one, with any opportunity taken to remove Māori rights and undo real or potential progress in closing equity and health equity gaps. Legislation that risks widening the health equity gap also risks worsening health outcomes for everyone due to increased pressure on health and social services.

We oppose particular Clauses, as follows.

- Opposed to Clause 8: amends the section of the Act especially related to te Tiriti
    - Repealing the responsibility of the health sector to understand and uphold te Tiriti is unacceptable, and repealing the requirement to improve Māori health outcomes is unacceptable.

- Opposed to Clause 9: Repeals section 7, which removes health sector principles from the Act and erodes fundamental responsibilities and functions of Te Whatū Ora Health NZ
    - Section 7 sets out the legal obligation of the health sector to be equitable and achieve equitable health outcomes. Removal of this responsibility is unacceptable; equity is a core function of health systems.
    - Section 7 also cements an obligation to Māori health equity; removal of this is unacceptable and also removes a core function of an Aotearoa NZ health system.

    - Section 7 sets out the obligation of the health sector to address climate change. This is the only time climate change is mentioned in the Act. The health sector has a responsibility to address upstream determinants of health, especially climate change, as it is recognised as amongst the greatest threats to human and ecological health[1] Removal of this responsibility by repealing section 7 not only weakens the health system, but removes significant opportunities to address climate change.

- Opposed to Clause 10: Removal of Te Mauri o Rongo, the New Zealand Health Charter
    - The charter set out how the health sector must treat its workers. Removing it diminishes actual physical and relational infrastructure needed to deliver high quality healthcare, and devalues health workers.

- Opposed to Clause 13: Emphasises out-sourcing care to the private sector, via Clauses 13, 14 which add that it is an objective of Te Whatū Ora Health NZ to collaborate with private healthcare providers
    - While not inherently problematic, emphasising the role of private healthcare while eroding the functions and principles of the public health sector is alarming.

- Opposed to Clause 16: Removes the requirement for tikanga and mātauranga knowledge on Te Whatū Ora's board, and removes requirements for cultural safety
    - The role of cultural safety as a central, irreplaceable element of health services and the health sector is well established[2]. Cultural safety focuses on patient outcomes and quality of care[3] - which the proposed Bill states are important - yet the Bill will erode a central element of good healthcare. We see this as yet another 'double speak' where the stated goal is contradicted by the content of the Bill.

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[1] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health

[2] https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-019-1082-3

[3] https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/b71d139dca/Statement-on-cultural-safety.pdf

- Opposed to Multiple clauses: Weakening of the role Iwi-Māori Partnership Boards in decision-making on health services, instead consolidating power for the politically appointed Hauora Māori Advisory Committee
    - Shifting from a service design and delivery purpose to advice and engagement, thereby eroding statutory roles, Crown partnership with Māori, and health equity attainment [4], to which Māori and Māori in the health sector have opposed[5]

Recommendations

We recommend that the Health Sector Principles remain, that Te Tiriti o Waitangi retain its meaning and application as in the 2022 Act, Te Mauri o Rongo not be repealed, and that Iwi-Māori partnership boards retain service delivery functions.

[4] https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/maori-voices-silenced-in-health-again/

[5] https://www.1news.co.nz/2025/08/08/iwi-maori-partnership-boards-unite-to-oppose-changes-to-health-legislation/