



7 April 2022

OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate & Health, Incorporated
Auckland, New Zealand
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Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Health
Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Tēnā koe Minister,

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council, and leading health sector organisations (as signed below), ask that you ensure that sustainability, decarbonisation and health system preparedness for climate change are included in our Health Sector reforms and as absolutely vital for the future health of New Zealanders.

We are deeply concerned at the lack of health reform discussion on climate action as this is an unprecedented opportunity for health and health equity gains, and for avoiding the serious health harm from climate change.

The recent UN IPCC AR6 report on climate impacts, adaptation and vulnerability highlighted the **worsening physical and mental health effect of climate change**, the lack of readiness in health systems and need for urgent adaptation, and the health, equity and economic benefits that will result from a well-planned climate response¹. We support the recent statement issued by the NZMA

¹ IPCC (2022) IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/> accessed 27/03/2022

stressing the importance of Planetary Health and outlining our ethical obligation as healthcare workers to act with both human and planetary wellbeing in mind at all times².

We also commend the statement from a wide coalition of health organisations in Australia calling for a healthcare system that is both **climate ready** and **climate friendly**³. In Aotearoa, the health sector reforms are an unmissable opportunity to rapidly achieve both these aims.

We recommend the following as critical actions in the reform of the health sector:

- Establish a dedicated sustainability unit, which will oversee decarbonisation within the sector and be supported by practising health professionals.
- Increase intersectionality between the health sector and other public agencies in order to ensure that a healthy climate response becomes a central factor for decision making in transport, housing, welfare, food systems, and other core government work
- Mandate that adequate funding, resourcing and agency is given to the Māori Health Authority so that it can be a central player in our health sector's response to climate change. Too often lip-service is paid to the need to have Te Ao Māori at the heart of our climate response; this is an opportunity to actually achieve that.
- Effectively incorporate Primary Care into the wider health sector climate response.
- Outline the immediate climate gains that will be achieved in the initial 2-year Health Plan. For example, ongoing repurposing of coal boilers, a ban on new gas boilers, all medicine and equipment procurement decisions to have greenhouse gas emissions as a key decision factor, an immediate stop on international business-class flights for staff, plant-based hospital catering, and an urgent switch from metered-dose to dry powder asthma inhalers.

These recommendations will draw together the best work underway in pockets of our health service, and extend them throughout. We all want robust, resilient and fair healthcare in Aotearoa, and it is our responsibility to use this once-in-a-generation opportunity to climate-proof our health system.

Yours sincerely,

	
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² New Zealand Medical Association. (2022) Available at: <https://www.nzma.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Planetary-Health-Position-Statement.pdf> accessed 27/03/2022

³ RACP (2022) Climate change open letter. Available at <https://www.racp.edu.au/news-and-events/all-news/news-details?id=926aaaaf-bbb2-61c2-b08b-ff01001c3177> accessed 27/03/2022

	
<p>Professor Jenny Carryer CNZM, Executive Director, College of Nurses Aotearoa (NZ) Inc</p>	<p>Alison Eddy, Chief Executive, New Zealand College of Midwives Te Kāreti o ngā Kaiwhakawhānau ki Aotearoa</p>
	
<p>Dr Sheila Hart, President, New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists</p>	<p>Dr Alistair Humphrey, Chair, New Zealand Medical Association</p>
	
<p>Selah Hart, Chief Executive Officer, Hāpai Te Hauora, Māori Public Health</p>	<p>Dr Gillian Gibson, Vice President New Zealand, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists</p>
	
<p>Paul Goulter, Chief Executive, New Zealand Nursing Organisation</p>	<p>Dr Samantha Murton, MNZM, MBChB, FRNZGP (Dist.), PGDipGP, FACadMED President Te Tumu Whakarae The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa</p>

	
Dr Matthew Jenkins, Acting Chair, Tu Te Akaaka Roa NZ National Committee, The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists	Associate Professor Vinay Lakra, President, The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
	
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