

Hon James Shaw, Minister for Climate Change  
cc Hon Andrew Little, Minister for Health  
cc Dr Rod Carr, Chairperson, Climate Change Commission

DRAFT on 5 February 2021

Dear Minister,

**Re: Climate Change Commission**

Once again we congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Climate Change. We would also like to emphasise our support for an all of government response to both reducing emissions and adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change in Aotearoa. However, such a response must include public health. Human health is not simply another stakeholder group in climate change policy, health is a fundamental human right and is deeply embedded within the political, economic, and ecological systems that we've generated or impacted on to cause climate change.

In December OraTaiao sent an email and briefing paper outlining recommendations for priority actions for climate and health (attached for your reference). One of these recommendations is to appoint two public health experts to the board of the Climate Change Commission, including one Māori public health expert. Additionally, we recommend the Commission set up a technical advisory group on health. While there is an increasing evidence base of the health impacts of climate change internationally (see for example the Lancet Countdown<sup>1</sup>), a better understanding of the risk and effects of climate change on health in Aotearoa is needed. For example, the National Climate Change Risk Assessment for NZ<sup>2</sup>, includes very little on health impacts. Additionally, Aotearoa currently has no climate and health action plan. Developing and implementing such an action plan that adopts an integrated cross sectoral approach is a critical step towards ensuring the co-benefits of climate and health action are realised and towards ensuring health and health equity issues are considered in Aotearoa's climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy<sup>3</sup>.

In order to ensure the wellbeing of New Zealanders we need effective climate change policy which also benefits health and reduces inequalities. To achieve this, the Commission must include public health experts and centralise Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Public health experts are trained in population health, disease prevention, promoting physical and mental health and organisation of the health service, as well as being highly experienced in the evidence-based methods for promoting healthy behaviour change on a societal level. Just as the response to the Covid-19 pandemic has benefitted from public health expertise, the climate crisis affects the whole population and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lancetcountdown.org/2020-report/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Climate%20Change/national-climate-change-risk-assessment-main-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/Climate-change/activities/integrating-health-in-policies-for-mitigation-of-and-adaptation-to-climate-change/projects-on-health-in-mitigation-and-adaptation/climate-environment-and-health-action-plan-and-information-system-cehapis>

requires this same level of understanding of effective interventions and health and equity impacts. We also recommend that one of the experts is Māori in order to assist with centralising Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We urge you to appoint public health experts to the climate change commission and to advise the commission to establish a health technical working group.

Yours sincerely,

<p><b>Dr Dermot Coffey,</b> Co-convenor, OraTaiao: NZ Climate &amp; Health Council <a href="mailto:co-convenor@orataiao.org.nz">co-convenor@orataiao.org.nz</a>, mobile, 021 026 75452</p> 	
	
<p><b>Dr George Laking, Aotearoa NZ President of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians</b></p> 	<p><b>Dr Kate Baddock, Chair, New Zealand Medical Association Te Hauora mō ngā iwi Katoa</b></p> 
	
<p><b>Kerri Nuku, Kaiwhakahaere, New Zealand Nurses Organisation</b></p> 	<p><b>Professor Jenny Carryer, Executive Director, College of Nurses Aotearoa (NZ) Inc</b></p>

	
	
<p>Alison Eddy, Chief Executive, New Zealand College of Midwives Te Kāreti o ngā Kaiwhakawhānau ki Aotearoa</p> 	<p>Selah Hart, Chief Executive Officer, Hāpai Te Hauora, Māori Public Health</p> 
	
<p>Sione Tu'itahi, Executive Director, Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand Runanga Whakapiki Ake I Te Hauora o Aotearoa</p>  <p>Runanga Whakapiki Ake i te Hauora o Aotearoa Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand</p>	<p>Dr Sheila Hart, President, New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists</p> 
	

Dr John Fitzgerald, President,  
New Zealand Psychological Society  
Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

New Zealand  
Psychological Society

Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa



Grant Berghan, Chief Executive Officer,  
Public Health Association of New Zealand  
Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui

*Grant Berghan*

*Samantha Murton*

Dr Nicola Hill, Chair,  
New Zealand National Board of the Royal  
Australasian College of Surgeons

Dr Samantha Murton, President,  
The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners,  
Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa



The Royal New Zealand  
College of General Practitioners  
Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa

*Nicola Hill*