



## Public Health Association Statement

*Prioritising Public Health: Key Election Considerations in Aotearoa New Zealand  
October 2023*

As we approach the upcoming election, the Public Health Association reaffirms its commitment to advancing public health priorities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our nation's public health policies hold the power to shape the well-being of all New Zealanders, transcending political affiliations. The choices made at the ballot box will determine the future of public health in our country, and it is imperative that we address key election considerations in this context.

### **1. Cost of Living:**

The rising cost of living, and access to equitable and adequate income in New Zealand is a critical public health concern. New Zealanders should be able to afford the basic necessities such as warm, safe and dry housing, nutritious food, and healthy environments. Voters should consider how political parties plan to address this pressing issue for the well-being of our communities.

### **2. Health Equity, Including Māori Health:**

We urge voters to prioritise health equity. The next government must commit to reducing and preventing health disparities, particularly among Māori and other marginalised communities. Importantly, addressing these inequities is not separatist; it is about rectifying historical imbalances by allocating the necessary resources, and will benefit all New Zealanders.

### **3. Climate Action and Disaster Prevention:**

Climate change poses a significant threat to public health. As climate change accelerates, parties' environmental policies should prioritise emission reductions, waste minimisation, water source protection, disaster prevention, and promote sustainable practices to ensure a healthy future.

### **4. Addressing Housing and the Determinants of Health:**

Addressing broad and structural determinants, such as social, economic, and environmental factors, is essential for promoting public health and reducing disparities. Policies must tackle the root causes of health inequities, including ensuring stable and secure housing environments, to build a healthier and more equitable society.

### **5. Healthcare Accessibility, Infrastructure, and Quality:**

Ensuring universal access to healthcare services remains paramount. Voters should scrutinise each party's plans for healthcare infrastructure development, funding, cost reduction, cultural safety, use of telehealth and digital solutions, addressing workforce shortages, and enhancing the quality of healthcare. A well-functioning healthcare system is the cornerstone of public health, and its accessibility and quality are vital.

### **6. Pandemic and Emergency Preparedness:**

In a world marked by health crises, pandemic and emergency preparedness is a vital concern. Considerations should encompass robust strategies, including investment in public health infrastructure, prioritisation of marginalised populations, exploration of diverse and community-based solutions, and effective communication during emergencies.



**7. Mental Health Services and Stigma Reduction:**

Mental health deserves heightened attention. The stigma associated with mental illness must be reduced, as well as the structural and institutional policies that perpetuate discrimination. Hence, investments in accessible and culturally sensitive mental health support, especially for vulnerable populations, and a critical focus on discriminatory policy should be a top priority.

**8. Shifting from Disease-Centric to Health-Centric Approaches**

Shifting our focus from disease-centric to health-centric approaches requires significant resource allocation and investment. This includes activities that not only prevent illness but also promote overall well-being. Initiatives fostering family connections, strengthening environmental bonds, and nurturing spiritual and wairua well-being should be prioritised alongside traditional health prevention and promotion work. Recognising the holistic nature of health and adequately resourcing these initiatives is essential for building a healthier society.

**9. Honouring Indigenous Rights and Mātauranga-Based Healthcare:**

Respecting indigenous rights, upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and investing in Mātauranga-based healthcare solutions are vital for our nation's public health. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and diverse healthcare approaches enhances healthcare effectiveness. Embracing global indigenous health systems is also important.

**10. Fostering Anti-Racism, Social Cohesion, and Youth Empowerment:**

Promoting social cohesion through anti-racism work is essential for a just and inclusive society. Policies that combat racism and discrimination contribute to the overall well-being of all New Zealanders. In addition, fostering youth leadership and providing opportunities for digital advancement are key aspects of building a healthier and more inclusive society.

As voters, we wield the power to shape our nation's public health policies. By considering these ten key factors, we can make informed choices that prioritise the health and well-being of all New Zealanders, ensuring a healthier and more equitable future.

We encourage you to engage with political parties, attend election debates, and make your voices heard on these critical public health issues. Together, we can build a healthier Aotearoa New Zealand for generations to come.

Public Health Association