

Oral submission to: Pae Ora Legislation Committee¹

Subject: [Pae Ora \(Healthy Futures\) Bill](#)

From: New Zealanders for Health Research (NZHR)²

Date: 26th January 2022

Thanks for the opportunity to present our [submission](#) to the Pae Ora legislation committee.

For anybody not aware, New Zealanders for Health Research is New Zealand's peak body representing the entire health and medical research pipeline. We are committed to bringing about best possible health for all New Zealanders, and we're on a mission to increase investment in health research as an essential and embedded component of all parts of New Zealand's health system, responsive to New Zealanders' unique health imperatives.

Late last year Finance Minister Grant Robertson made a [statement](#) to the effect that "knowing that we have done everything we can to keep New Zealanders alive... is the basic duty of Government".

We fully agree, and the starting point of our submission is that historically the health system has not been doing everything possible to keep people alive. We draw attention to the 13,000+ New Zealanders per year who die prematurely and who are denied the opportunity live to a ripe old age, about 6000 from preventable causes and about 7000 because the research which would identify effective treatments is either yet to be done or completed.

We also note that Māori rates of both preventable and currently non-preventable premature mortality are running at about twice the rate of non-Māori. While the proposed legislation MAY result in improved rates of Māori premature preventable mortality (depending on how much real clout is given to the Māori Health Authority by way of its funding allocation) it's difficult to see how it will impact on currently non-preventable mortality without a much stronger commitment to Māori responsive health research.

As an aside, while we applaud the legislation's commitment to bringing about equitable health outcomes for Māori we note that health outcomes for non-Māori as measured by premature mortality are also very poor. Personally, if I were Māori I think I'd be feeling very short changed by the legislation as currently drafted given that its focus on equitable outcomes is not matched by a similar commitment to improving health outcomes overall - I'd be wanting a commitment to much more than mere equity, albeit that that would be an important first step. As a further aside I'd be concerned that premature mortality - that most fundamental measure of health system performance - is not included in the recently published suite of health system indicators, either for Māori or the population as a whole.

¹ [Pae Ora Legislation - New Zealand Parliament \(www.parliament.nz\)](http://www.parliament.nz)

² <https://www.nz4healthresearch.org.nz/>

New Zealanders for Health Research supports the need for health system change. We see the Bill as good start albeit that it needs strengthening to require the Māori Health Authority, Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Health to embed health research and innovation as an essential component of how they collectively govern, lead and manage the New Zealand health system so that it truly does bring about significantly improved health outcomes.

The need for health research to be embedded as an essential component of the health system is supported by the Productivity Commission, the Health Research Strategy and the Waitangi Tribunal.

We therefore believe that the legislation's chances of being effective should be enhanced by including

- a requirement for all components of the reformed health system to adopt an overt evidence base to their functions and strategies;
- provision for a health research and innovation strategy covering all aspects of health research and innovation together with all sources of funding and investment;
- non-discretionary opportunities to contribute and be consulted

We've detailed some specific recommendations as to how the Bill could be amended to give effect to these points, including requirements for all components of the new system to be evidence based, and for a health research and development strategy to be added to the suite of strategy documents provided for in the current Bill.

In respect of our last point we think the health system would be better served if consultation was open to all who believed they had something valuable to offer, particularly in the first few years of the roll-out of the reforms.

To conclude, in the same way that the country has gone to extraordinary lengths to implement health research based measures to prevent what would otherwise be significant levels of Covid-19 related mortality, we should and could be using the opportunity of the health reforms to go to equally extraordinary lengths to invest in and implement the results of health R&D to prevent and address the existing significant premature mortality from all other causes.

Thanks again for the opportunity to contribute and I'm happy to respond to questions.

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