

## Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health  
Minister Responsible for the GCSB  
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS  
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations  
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



10 FEB 2021

Tēnā koe

### Letter of Expectations for district health boards and subsidiary entities for 2021/22

This letter sets out the Government's expectations for district health boards (DHBs) and their subsidiary entities for 2021/22. As a DHB Chair you are accountable to me for meeting these expectations.

This government acknowledges the progress made to rebuild our health system, but there is still more to do. It is clear that COVID-19 will be placing a range of pressures on our health system for some time. We are well placed to continue to respond to resurgence as needed and to lock-in new ways of operating based on our COVID-19 response so that we retain and embed new and innovative approaches where possible.

A safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19 is an essential part of how we protect our communities, and this will be a key piece of work for the health system during 2021/22. Additional information will be provided when it becomes available.

As you know the Government has accepted the high-level direction of travel of the Health and Disability System Review (HDSR) and during this next phase we will roll out our plan to improve the public health system to ensure it delivers high quality services, improved equity for our vulnerable populations and supports better outcomes for all New Zealanders.

There will be uncertainty ahead, but I expect that this will not stop you from driving forward and continuing to deliver the improvements already underway. It is important that the sector continues to function at its best to provide health and disability services for New Zealanders while system changes are being confirmed and implemented. I also expect that you will begin to work together on further enhancements. The work we do now will ensure we have the right models of care to support longer term sustainability and to maximise outcomes through robust investment in primary and community care.

The priorities this Government has previously outlined to guide DHB planning will remain of critical importance for the coming year. Our wellbeing and equity system priorities together with a focus on giving practical effect to Whakamaua: the Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025 and improvements to DHB sustainability, continue to provide a solid framework for planning and articulating the work DHBs are doing:

- giving practical effect to Whakamaua: the Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025
- improving sustainability
- improving child wellbeing
- improving mental wellbeing including a focus on the transformational direction for our approach to mental health and addiction through the agreed actions from the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry

- improving wellbeing through prevention;
- better population outcomes supported by a strong and equitable public health and disability system
- better population health and outcomes supported by primary health care.

I would like you to continue to build on these areas of focus, so we improve equity for our vulnerable populations while also ensuring COVID-19 lessons and innovations are captured.

I expect all DHBs to deliver breakeven results by the end of 2021/22 and your annual plan will not be supported without this commitment. Strong fiscal management is critical to support our collective ability to invest more in new models of care and in primary care and population prevention approaches.

It is also imperative that the health system maintains and continues to strengthen our health capital planning, investment and delivery and as Chair you must have clear oversight of the DHB's annual plan to ensure it is sustainable, person centred and reflects Government expectations, including breakeven financial targets.

As you will be aware the Government will be implementing recommendations from the Health and Disability system review. This work will be undertaken alongside the work laid out in this letter. I expect that all DHB's will continue to provide the highest quality services to their populations while any changes are implemented across the system.

A number of DHBs will benefit from expert support across a range of areas and I understand that Chairs are working on an exemplars group. I expect you to seek the support of your colleagues and the Ministry where you need a lift in capability or support to navigate specific challenges.

This Government has provided specific sustainability funding for DHB led improvement projects. I expect to see tangible outcomes being delivered and implemented with this funding and reports on the impact it is having.

You will be aware that pay parity for workforces in the DHB-funded sectors is an issue. This is also an issue in other parts of the State sector, and it is important that a whole-of-Government approach is taken. This Government's position will be developed at a central agency level and I expect you to contribute to and act consistently with this approach. There are complex matters that need careful consideration, including whether DHB funding has flowed equitably to employees in the past and how this would be protected in the future.

I expect all DHBs to increase the pace and scale of implementation of the Care Capacity Demand Management Programme (CCDM) in 2021 to meet the expectations outlined in the 2018 NZNO DHB MECA. I want to be clear that full implementation of CCDM includes annual FTE calculations and ensuring agreed budgeted nursing and midwifery FTE are in place.

DHBs are responsible for the health outcomes for your population and it is important that DHBs and the Ministry continue to work together, and with primary and community providers, to ensure we have a strong and equitable public health system delivering better health outcomes for our most vulnerable populations who have long-standing health inequities.

Please ensure any approaches to a service reconfiguration support improved access to care and equity, and are financially sound. As you are aware any shifts or additions in workforce / FTE must be considered as a service change and follow service change processes. DHBs

must remain focused and prepared for increased pressure and ensure systems are in place to ensure COVID-19 innovations are used to avoid pressure building up on existing services.

DHBs are expected to support and contribute to the Ministry's National Asset Management Programme (NAMP), which will be used to assist the Capital Investment Committee and Ministers to make more informed decision on DHB capital expenditure. I expect DHBs to develop their own Asset Management Policy and Strategy and align their asset management practices with the Ministry of Health district health board sector Asset Management Framework.

Unlike previous years I have strong expectations that the annual planning process will be completed on time and as Chair it is your responsibility to meet all deadlines for this process. I expect a strong first draft annual plan will be provided to the Ministry for review in early March so that a robust final plan that meets all expectations will be able to be agreed with me as early as possible post Budget 21. If timelines are not met and robust and appropriate plans are not delivered I will not be able to sign them off for the year.

Please note that I do not require you to refresh your Statement of Intent for 2021/22.

We face complex challenges that require collective approaches and I am looking forward to working with you as we continue our efforts to improve outcomes for New Zealanders.

Thank you for the work you have been doing to provide strong governance within our health system. I remind you that in everything you do you are part of the system.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Little', written over a faint blue outline of a person's head and shoulders.

Hon Andrew Little  
**Minister of Health**