



10 MAY 2018

Ms Sally Webb ONZM  
Chair  
Waikato District Health Board  
Private Bag 3200  
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Dear Ms Webb

## Letter of expectations for District Health Boards and Subsidiary Entities for 2018/19

This letter sets out the Government's expectations for District Health Boards (DHBs) and their subsidiary entities for 2018/19.

The Government wishes to signal an increased priority for primary care, mental health, public delivery of health services, and a strong focus on improving equity in health outcomes.

This Government listened to New Zealanders, and campaigned on these concerns. We will deliver on our democratic mandate to ensure New Zealand has a strong and effective public health service that we can all be proud of. To achieve this we want the public health service to be accessible and affordable for all New Zealanders, and to ensure that appropriate services are provided in the right locations at the right times.

### Our Approach

Our Government wants to improve population health. Population health approaches and services are essential components of strategies to address determinants of health and achieve better health equity and wellbeing. I expect DHBs to work closely with and support their local public health units and health promotion providers. New Zealanders have made it clear that they are concerned about the increasing unaffordability of primary health services, regional inequity of access to secondary health services, and inadequate mental health service provision nationwide.

Our Government takes a longer term view. To this end, we will review the primary care funding formula and DHB targets, as well as wider sector settings. The Ministerial Advisory Group will also advise me on further opportunities to improve equitable health outcomes for all New Zealanders including how the system needs to change to enable those improvements. It is expected that you will be fully supportive of this work, and where appropriate will provide direct contribution.

We intend to better resource primary care in order to deliver better health outcomes, and to reduce the growing pressure on emergency services. In Budget 2018, we will lay out our plan to reduce the cost of access to primary care for New Zealanders.

In our first 100 days we have introduced legislation to increase access to medicinal cannabis, and launched the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. We expect your staff and members of your community to participate in the Inquiry and I expect you will encourage your people to do this.

## **Funding**

There is no doubt that there has been a low priority on funding health in recent years. In contrast to other countries, core Crown health expenditure in New Zealand dropped as a proportion of the overall economy between 2008 and 2017. It is a credit to those who serve across the health sector that health outcomes have held up as well as they have despite nine years of under investment. Please pass on my sincere thanks to your staff for their commitment and service to the public, particularly during difficult times.

The Government is committed to delivering a well-funded public health service. That is why we will invest \$8 billion to meet cost pressures and deliver new initiatives over the next four years. While this is more generous than before, much of the new funding will be absorbed in the service improvements already signalled by the Government. The public will rightly want to see the health system delivering more for them in return for the increased investment.

## **Capital Planning**

I expect that your DHB will continue to focus on long term capital planning. This work should include service planning and understanding the state of your assets. I anticipate the need to prioritise the available capital funding, and your work in this area will assist in this process. I also require you to continue to work regionally when developing business cases for investment.

## **Accountability for Improved Performance**

We will hold DHB Chairs directly accountable for their DHB's performance. We expect Boards to be highly engaged and to hold Chief Executives and management tightly accountable for improved performance within each DHB, particularly in relation to equity of access to health services and equity of health outcomes.

Under the previous government, relationships across the health sector became strained. My expectation is that the Ministry Advisory Group will work with the Ministry of Health to strengthen these relationships.

I trust that you will work with your regional DHBs to support regional delivery of services where appropriate. There should be strong shared responsibility and accountability across regions to ensure that regional services are delivered well and support equity of access for the population.

I expect that you will incorporate and share best practice innovation with the wider sector. Clinical leaders play a key role in this work. Strong and proactive relationships with the Ministry, other DHBs, primary health organisations (PHO), non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders across the sector will be required. I am looking for increased collaboration across all parts of our health

service to deliver more affordable primary care, improved elective surgery volumes, improvements in equity of access to services, and a higher quality of care.

I will be meeting and speaking with you frequently during the year to discuss performance, and I will be looking particularly closely at your ability to work together to deliver in the Government's priority areas, and to keep within budget.

## **Workforce**

To deliver affordable, accessible and quality care, workforce changes will be needed. This includes greater utilisation of different workforces in primary care settings. With a growing and aging population, there will be more work for all, and an increased emphasis on the use of generalist workforces for less specialised tasks will be required. Health care professionals from allied health, nursing, medicine and related fields will need to operate at the top of their scope of practice. I expect DHBs to be bold in their vision for change while also remaining responsive to the concerns raised by the workforce.

I understand DHB Chief Executives have collectively signed up to having Care Capacity Demand Management fully in place in all DHBs by July 2021 with oversight of progress and feedback on milestones monitored by the Safe Staffing and Health Workplaces Governance Group. I encourage you to proceed with timely implementation and expect that acute mental health inpatient services are a first priority. I also encourage you to address wider workforce development to better respond to mental health issues, in line with the *Mental Health and Addiction Workforce Action Plan*.

Additionally, to ensure greater community-based care and assist in workforce development, I expect all DHBs to adhere to the Medical Council's requirement for Community Based Attachments for interns.

We are also interested in expanding the role of health-based professionals in school settings. This includes considering the role of health-based professionals in primary and early education in the future, and extending School Based Health Services so all secondary schools have a comprehensive youth health service.

## **Expansion of PHARMAC model to manage hospital medicines**

PHARMAC's role in managing hospital medicines has steadily increased. Most recently, since 2013 PHARMAC has made decisions on the adoption of new technology in hospital medicines. In my letter of 27 April 2018, I confirmed that from 2018/19 the full budget management responsibility for all remaining hospital medicines will move from DHBs to PHARMAC, in order to support our wider health priorities.

## **National Patient Flow**

As you will be aware, National Patient Flow is a new developmental national collection that the Ministry and DHBs have been implementing over the past three years. The collection will provide information at key points of the patient journey through secondary and tertiary care, helping DHBs to quantify unmet referred

demand for services, and to better understand and improve their patient management processes.

I anticipate that this will become a core national collection in the future, and I expect DHBs to continue working in partnership with the Ministry with a focus on improving data submission and data quality for the National Patient Flow collection during 2018/19.

### **Planning for 2018/19 and the future**

We are focused on ensuring better health outcomes for the public, and have clear expectations for all DHBs. This includes the following.

- Increasing the rate of organ donations. DHBs are expected to manage the associated costs within their baselines.
- Improving the health and wellbeing of infants, children and youth. I expect that your 2018/19 annual plan shows how you will achieve this, particularly for Māori, Pacific people, and people living in high areas of deprivation.
- Improving equity and reducing the burden caused by long term conditions, in particular diabetes. I expect DHBs in their contracts with PHOs to explicitly require improvements in performance and reporting. I expect DHBs to incentivise PHOs to demonstrate improvement in primary care settings and increase PHO accountability for effectively managing long term conditions with particular regard to diabetes.
- The Government also wants to support our health system to implement a strong response to climate change, this will include working with other DHBs, other agencies and across Government. Plans to address climate change and health, need to incorporate both mitigation and adaptation strategies, underpinned by cost benefit analysis of co-benefits and financial savings.

Your DHB's annual plan for 2018/19 will need to reflect my expectations. In addition, I am not requiring your DHB to refresh your Statement of Intent in 2018/19. However, I will expect all DHBs to demonstrate a renewed focus on their strategic direction by refreshing their Statements of Intent in 2019/20.

Finally, I would like to thank you and your DHB again for your ongoing work to improve the health of New Zealanders. The public deserves the highest standards of leadership and performance, and by working together we can ensure that improvements are made for our population.

Yours sincerely



Hon Dr David Clark  
**Minister of Health**