

Factsheet – Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill

Aotearoa New Zealand’s public health system has been found to be fragmented, inequitable and inconsistent. For some population groups, in particular Māori, Pacific peoples and people with disabilities, it results in poorer health compared to others in New Zealand.

The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill lays the foundation for the transformation of our health system to support all New Zealanders to live longer and have the best possible quality of life.

The Bill’s purpose is to:

- (a) protect, promote, and improve the health of all New Zealanders; and
- (b) achieve equity by reducing health disparities among New Zealand’s population groups, in particular for Māori; and
- (c) build towards pae ora (healthy futures) for all New Zealanders.

To achieve this purpose, the Bill provides a new legal framework for the health system. It reforms some of the structures and organisations, and provides for common principles and objectives to guide all entities to work together and ensure they are accountable for improving health outcomes.

Health system principles

The Bill introduces a set of health system principles that provide common expectations across the health system, at all levels and for all people and groups. The principles describe the key aspects of a modern, compassionate and responsive health system.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health will continue to be the chief steward of the health system. It will focus on strategy, policy, regulation and monitoring.

Health New Zealand

The Bill establishes Health New Zealand – a new entity that will replace district health boards and lead the operation of the health system. It will work in partnership with the Māori Health Authority to design and deliver health services. This will make the system simpler, more consistent, and able to focus on population health and meaningful community and consumer participation.

Māori Health Authority

To drive improvement in hauora Māori and ensure Māori are involved at every level of decision-making, the Bill establishes the Māori Health Authority. The Authority is an independent entity with clear accountabilities to both Māori and Ministers. It will work with Health New Zealand to commission and plan services, commission kaupapa Māori services and monitor the performance of the system for Māori. The Authority will also work with the Ministry of Health to prepare national strategies and advise the Minister.

Iwi-Māori partnership boards

Iwi-Māori partnership boards are already part of the health system – the Bill formally recognises them for the first time in order to represent the local voice of Māori.

The interim Māori Health Authority board is working with Māori to advise on the specific functions and powers of the partnership boards. There are likely to be changes to the Bill to reflect that process ahead of it being passed.

Population and public health

The Bill makes important provisions to strengthen public and population health. A new Public Health Agency will be established as a business unit within the Ministry of Health to provide national leadership on public health. Both Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority will have functions and objectives to promote health and wellbeing and to provide services and interventions to prevent, reduce or delay health needs.

A more accountable health system

The Bill sets new requirements to ensure accountability across the health system. The Bill requires the Minister of Health to issue a Government Policy Statement at least every three years. The Statement will set the government's priorities and expectations for the health system.

The Government Policy Statement will inform the New Zealand Health Plan – the key document setting out how services will be planned and delivered across the motu. The Plan will be agreed by Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority before being approved by the Minister.

Primary and community care will be organised into localities that cover all of New Zealand. Localities help underscore the nationally coordinated, locally-driven aspect of the future health system. A locality is a geographic concept that focuses on tailoring services to meet the needs of people in a particular place.

Each locality will have a locality plan setting out how services will be managed within that locality. When developing these plans, Health New Zealand will talk to local people and communities to make sure the plans are genuinely informed by the needs and priorities of the people in the locality.

Other key documents

The Bill provides for a number of other key documents that will guide the health system:

- National health strategies will be set to provide a basis for longer-term direction, with requirements for an overarching New Zealand health strategy and specific health strategies for hauora Māori, Pacific health, and the health of disabled people.
- The New Zealand Health Charter will provide common values, principles, and behaviours for all entities in the health system and the people employed by them.
- A new Code of Consumer Participation will support consistent approaches to ensuring consumer participation and enable the consumer voice to be heard throughout the system.

Continuation of some existing statutory provisions

The Bill also continues Pharmac, the New Zealand Blood and Organ Service, and the Health Quality and Safety Commission, which will continue to exercise their current functions.

Next steps

The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill will be considered by a specialist select committee of Parliament between October 2021 and April 2022. You can make a submission to the committee on parliament's website www.parliament.nz

The Bill is expected to come into force on 1 July 2022.