

18 August 2025

Committee Secretariat  
Health Select Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

## **Submission on Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill**

Tēnā koutou

Age Concern New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the *Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill*. This Bill is relevant to all New Zealanders and to Age Concern New Zealand in its work with older people. As such, we want an age-friendly health system that takes into consideration the rights and needs of people across their life span. This would help New Zealand with actions toward the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing which aims towards a world where all people can live long and healthy lives.<sup>1</sup> It would also contribute to our country being a great place to live, learn, work, play and age.

We are pleased that the Government wants to improve the effectiveness of health service delivery to patients. We all want high quality, effective, accessible health services that New Zealanders trust and are confident will be there to help them and their loved ones when needed. We all also want a health workforce that is valued, skilled, and resourced to effectively carry out their work.

Dignity, wellbeing, equity, and respect for older people are the values that underpin the work carried out by Age Concern New Zealand.

### **Based on our values and our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we do not support the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill.**

The Amendment Bill removes the health sector principles and the New Zealand Health Charter Te Mauri o Rongo from the Act. This would impact negatively on how Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora delivers its services. The health sector principles and the Health Charter were developed through wide consultation to establish the principles and values that should guide health organisations and health and care workers in their work with patients, whānau and communities. If the Health Charter Te Mauri o Rongo is removed where is the

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

requirement for health workplaces to be physically, mentally and culturally safe at every level of the system?

Age Concern New Zealand supports a broader approach to health services that considers the health equity gaps that are experienced (and well documented) by Māori, Pasifika, migrant communities, rainbow and Takatāpui communities, disabled people and those who live in rural and small-town New Zealand. Poorer health outcomes, shorter life expectancy, and higher rates of medical conditions and hospitalisations for these groups are well documented. The statistics are factual, evidence-based, real. We do not support removing the focus on achieving health equity and engaging with Māori populations as proposed in the Amendment Bill.

## About Age Concern New Zealand

---

Age Concern New Zealand is a trusted charity working in local communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand to support older people, their friends and whānau. We have 29 local Age Concerns operating in 40 locations throughout the country and a national office based in Wellington.

Our strategic goal is:

*Every older person feels connected, has positive choices and can age well.*

Our values of Dignity, Wellbeing, Equity, and Respect for older people are our guiding lights and underpin everything we do.

Our core services include advocacy and public awareness, social connection, health promotion, elder abuse and neglect prevention, and providing support through expert information, advice and referrals.

We are proud of our heritage in standing up for the rights of older New Zealanders for more than 50 years. As an organisation, our focus is on contributing to the overall wellbeing of older New Zealanders.

## Our Comments

---

1. Access to healthcare when we need it is a primary concern for all New Zealanders, including older New Zealanders. We have heard many comments over the past year about long waits for primary care appointments and for surgery that would vastly improve the quality of life for many, including older people.

2. The anecdotal evidence we are hearing through our work with older people aligns with findings from a Consumer NZ Survey released in February 2025.<sup>2</sup> The survey indicated that 39% of respondents of all ages considered healthcare to be a key issue, up from 27% in October 2024 and 23% in February 2023. Although concern was felt across all age groups, 65% of people aged 70+ identified healthcare as a top issue.
3. Respondents' concerns related to the ability of the health system to meet demand as well as affordability and quality. Wait times, ageing hospital facilities, hospital closures, hospitals providing only limited services, and a shortage of nurses, general practitioners and specialists are all causing people anxiety about getting help when they need it, where they need it.
4. Similarly, the June 2025 IPSOS Survey reported that healthcare and hospital services reached the highest level of concern across all age groups (43%) since reporting by IPSOS began. It was the top issue identified by 66% of respondents over 65 years of age.<sup>3</sup>
5. The media regularly highlights concerns about the ability of the health sector to meet current levels of need. Recent examples include headlines such as “The Postcode lottery for hip and knee replacement is still strongly in force”<sup>4</sup> and “New Zealand’s worst places for heart care revealed – and people are dying.”<sup>5</sup>
6. We are concerned that many older people cannot get health care appointments when they need them or are deterred from seeking help early because of the cost involved. Older people living in rural areas or provincial towns, including many kaumātua, experience even more barriers to accessing health services, resulting in poorer health outcomes. Some are required to travel considerable distances to obtain health care, which presents a further barrier.
7. Older age is associated with higher rates of disability and chronic diseases that lead to the need for higher engagement with health services. Back in 2020, the New Zealand Medical Journal stated that the population aged 65 and above accounted for 42% of health service usage while making up only 15% of the population. This was expected to increase with our ageing population to a possible 50% usage by 2025/26.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/consumer-nz-survey-reveals-new-zealanders-face-rising-healthcare-concerns-amid-ongoing-financial-uncertainty>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en-nz/ipsos-new-zealand-issues-monitor-june-2025>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/in-depth/568972/the-postcode-lottery-for-hip-and-knee-replacements-is-still-strongly-in-force>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/360785521/nzs-worst-places-heart-care-revealed-and-people-are-dying>

8. We would like greater clarity around the intention of including working with private healthcare providers as a function for Health New Zealand. We are concerned that the public health system will become a second-tier service while private healthcare gains greater precedence. Private health insurance is beyond the reach of many New Zealanders. We recognise that Government funding and effort is going into providing a comprehensive and affordable health service for all New Zealanders. We do not want New Zealand's health care system to be primarily dependent on the provision of private health care.

## Our Recommendations

---

1. We do not support the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill. We recommend action and funding is instead invested in delivering the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022. If this Amendment Bill is passed health outcomes for Māori, Pasifika, migrants, rainbow and Takatāpui communities, disabled people and those who live rurally will remain poorer than for European and other New Zealanders.

If the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill proceeds Age Concern New Zealand makes the following recommendations.

2. We agree in part with the new purpose to be added to the Act but recommend it is revised to read "To ensure that patients get quality, timely *and equitable* access to health services".
3. We agree in part with the new objective for Health New Zealand but recommend it is revised to "deliver effective, timely *and equitable* services".
4. We strongly recommend retaining the health sector principles and the New Zealand Health Charter Te Mauri o Rongo in the Act.
5. We recommend that Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora continues to work with Iwi-Māori Partnership Boards in the same way that it is currently doing.
6. We recommend that existing expertise requirements are retained for appointees to the Board of Health New Zealand.
7. We would like the health of older people more visible in the Bill. We recommend for example that clause 23 (which amends section 36A) specifies that the immunisation target is "the immunisation of children and older people".

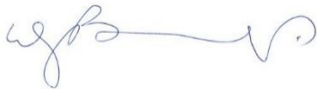
8. Greater clarity must be added about what is intended by Health New Zealand working with private healthcare providers. We are concerned that publicly provided health services will become secondary to private health care which is beyond the reach of many New Zealanders.

### Closing Comment

---

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission on the *Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill*, we are very interested in the outcome of the consultation process.

Nāku noa, nā,



Karen Billings-Jensen  
Chief Executive  
Age Concern New Zealand