

NEW ZEALAND HEALTH & Hospital

Election special November 2011

In the lead-up to the General Election, New Zealand Health & Hospital asked each of the political parties currently in power and standing again to provide 500 words, a logo and a photograph relating to their party's health policy. The contributions are published here unedited.

New Zealand Health & Hospital
P O Box 3541, Wellington 6140
Ph: 04 472 1630
Fax: 04 472 1621
Email: dmonigatti@xtra.co.nz



Robyn Stent, ACT

ACT believes that the best way to lift the standard of healthcare for New Zealanders is to introduce greater choice and competition into the sector.

We believe that individuals and families should have much greater control over the kind of care they choose to access and that the policy focus should be access, rather than a focus on the absolute retention of a government monopoly over health.

Despite huge increases in funding from successive governments, healthcare delivery is getting less efficient. Between 1999 and 2008, health funding more than doubled in real terms yet the outputs from our medical facilities did not keep pace with this funding increase. We still have far too many New Zealanders dying on waiting lists and not getting vital treatment such as chemotherapy quickly enough. The National Government has made a small amount of progress but we need ACT as part of the next government to push for further change.

In the short term ACT would encourage greater use of the private sector by District Health Boards so that people can get treatment as soon as they need it. We also support moves by the National Government to put more resources into front line staff rather than back room bureaucracy and we believe primary health care subsidies should be targeted at those on low incomes rather than at everyone, including the very wealthy. In the longer term ACT supports lowering taxes so people can keep more of their own money and fund more of the costs of their own health care. This means people will have greater autonomy and choice and it will drive efficiency gains in the sector.

While we want more individual choice we do believe it is the role of Government to take an active role in public health when it comes to things such as vaccination and epidemic prevention. In terms of workforce, NZ is competing with all countries (particularly Australia) for skilled workers and as Australians receive over 35% more income than Kiwis, they are able to pay more in taxes and private fees for medical treatment than we are. In addition to losing healthcare professionals to Australia, our ability to attract and retain healthcare professionals from the wider world is becoming more difficult as our relative economic performance continues to decline.

World class health care, whether it is provided publically or privately, is very expensive. Therefore it is vital that the New Zealand economy grows at a healthy rate so we can afford the health care services we need. ACT supports lowering taxes and reducing the regulatory burden so business can afford to grow, invest, and create jobs and increase wages. These are the policies we must pursue in order to get long term and sustained economic growth.

Without sensible economic growth policies we won't be able to fund the kind of world-class health system New Zealanders deserve and ACT is focused on addressing the economy as a top priority.



Kevin Hague, Green Party

The Green Party wants the best possible health for everyone, with high quality services that are fair.

Personal health is the result of many factors, the majority of which are outside the health sector, like income, education, housing and ethnicity. A more equal society, and improvements in all these other areas, will greatly improve health outcomes.

This is why we are focusing this election on the issue of child poverty. One in four New Zealand children are growing up in poverty. They are our children, and they deserve better. We have developed four solutions that would bring 100,000 children out of poverty by 2014.

For more information check out <http://www.greens.org.nz/endchildpoverty>.

We believe in promoting health, keeping people well and treating illness early. These are also the most cost effective health services, but are currently underfunded and being cut further.

If we invest more in public health, and preventative measures we can improve health outcomes. This is why we want to rebalance the Health budget. Increasing spending on the services designed to keep people well from the current 2% of the total Health budget to 10%.

We are committed to a publicly funded healthcare system that provides the same access and level of care regardless of wealth or income. All the evidence shows that a more equal society is better for everyone.

This is why we are committed to our practical economic plan that creates decent jobs, adds resilience to our economy, and protects our natural environment. It is a plan for clean green prosperity for all New Zealanders.

Our plan will create 100,000 new jobs through direct government investment in housing, by ensuring our state-owned energy companies capture the massive export opportunities in the renewable energy sector; and, most importantly, by shifting the drivers for green jobs in the private sector.

Health funding is and will always be a question of prioritisation, how we can best divide up the pie? We want to engage New Zealanders in a national conversation to work out how government should make hard decisions about which services are and are not publicly funded.

This will always be a political decision – it is at the heart of what politics is – but it is important that we do so in conjunction with the public to ensure that everyone can take ownership of the decisions.

We hope to be a part of improving health outcomes in New Zealand. Our vision is one of a holistic approach to health and well-being that is focused on promoting good health, reducing the risk of illness, and improving quality of life.

A well-funded health system, with a focus on quality and safe care, which everyone can access in a timely way regardless of their ability to pay.

A nation with equitable health outcomes, including life expectancy and health status measures, for all where everyone can access healthcare services, regardless of their ability to pay.

Authorised by Metiria Turei and Russel Norman, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.




Grant Robertson, Labour

Keeping Kiwis Healthy: Labour's health policy

Labour is committed to enhancing the well-being of all New Zealanders, so they can live longer, healthier lives. To do this we need to shift thinking away from seeing health policy in isolation, and from seeing healthcare as something that begins in a hospital or doctor's surgery, and ensure that all our policies enhance the well-being and health status of New Zealanders.

Good health is something that begins in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities. If a house is overcrowded, cold and damp, then it is hard to stay healthy. If parents lose their jobs they find it hard to put healthy food on the table or afford a visit to the doctor. If people do not have adequate income, then they find it hard to afford the basic necessities of life.

These are examples of what are sometimes called the social determinants of health. We must address the inequities that are contributing to poor health outcomes. This will require particular attention to policies in terms of education, income equality, housing, taxation and social development and how they impact on health.

A focus on addressing the social determinants of health and access to healthcare will not only improve health outcomes, but will also prove cost-effective and good for economic growth over time as the need for expensive interventions and treatments reduces. There is not a bottomless pit for expenditure, but investments now in proven early interventions should reduce the need for expenditure not only in the health system but in other areas of government including social development and corrections.

Labour will also ensure that all core government policy initiatives face Health Impact Assessments, to make sure that all policy helps improve New Zealanders' health.

Our Core Commitments

1. A commitment to funding the sector so it can manage changing demographics and health status of New Zealanders.
2. Ensuring that innovations and efficiencies within the health system are encouraged by launching the Health Innovation Project to drive nationwide application of models of good practice in the delivery of health services.
3. A re-invigorated Primary Health Care strategy that emphasises accessibility, affordability and coordinated services.
4. Agenda for Children – It's About Our Kids, including extending free access for under sixes to after-hours medical services, meaning 24 hour, 7 day a week free access for under 6 year olds.
5. Develop nationwide tools for elective surgery prioritisation based around timeliness, equity and quality.
6. A 10 year plan to increase access to primary oral health care services, beginning with young people and pregnant mothers.
7. The development, retention and recruitment of a high quality health workforce that sees the right skills used in the right place at the right time, with gives enhanced roles for nurses and community health workers.
8. Adequate and sustainable funding for aged care that allows "ageing in place" but also provides safe, properly staffed residential care.
9. A co-ordinated approach to address the obesity epidemic that is costing New Zealand millions of dollars a year.
10. Ensuring mental health is restored as a priority for District Health Boards with appropriate targets to restore and improve mental health services.

Further information about Labour's Health Policy can be found here: www.ownourfuture.co.nz/health

māori
P A R T Y



Tariana Turia, Māori Party

The recent Waitangi Tribunal report, commonly referred to as WAI 262, articulated what they described as the ongoing crisis in Maori health in their report, Ko Aotearoa Tenei. They reported that Maori have significantly lower life expectancy, and much higher rates of infant mortality than non-Maori, and much higher rates of heart disease, rheumatic fever, stroke, lung cancer, diabetes, asthma, meningococcal disease, schizophrenia and many other illnesses.

One of the biggest challenges, therefore, for the health and disability system is to improve its performance to address ongoing disparities and improve Māori health outcomes.

A key focus advanced by the Māori Party is Whānau Ora. Whānau Ora is about caring for our own; taking collective responsibility for the wellbeing of the group. Every opportunity should be afforded to support whānau, hapu and iwi in their own growth and development.

We want our whānau to be the best that they can be and to be supported by an equitable, sustainable health system. We want to accelerate clinical and service integration; to achieve equity in access, and to focus on targets which enable public reporting.

We are committed to:

- prioritise oral health including instigating an annual oral health check for low income families;
- continue to address the increases in diseases of poverty such as rheumatic fever and meningitis;
- establish youth wellbeing centres in consultation with rangatahi;
- bariatric surgery for at least 1000 more people each year to address obesity, heart disease and diabetes;
- review the Health Act to ensure implementation of rongoa Māori;
- investigate a co-management model for Māori statutory representatives on DHBs to increase their influence. New DHB representatives to be appointed by Minister responsible for Māori Health.
- Establish a health workforce project for pay parity to retain Māori nurses in iwi providers
- investment in development pathways for the non-regulated workforce (community health workers);
- Refocus Māori Provider development to focus on outcomes in primary care where services need to grow.
- remove tax from prescription medicines and investigate the viability of green prescriptions
- Whānau Ora will be rolled out across government with a separate appropriation in each financial year
- universal well child services to all children under 6
- review of vision and hearing testing as universal tests
- We will monitor cultural competency in all agencies to ensure the quality of services, and equity of access and outcomes to bring out well-being. Chief executives will be required to report six monthly on how they are progressing positive outcomes for whānau. Cultural competency will be an employment standard in justice, health, education and social services.
- We will promote marae-based health clinics as preferred sites of wellbeing and service delivery to support whanau.
- We will support roadshows to promote educational pathways in areas in which Māori are under-represented; such as health science academies (Te Kura Putaiaora) or science camps.
- We will introduce plain packaging and we will advance the tobacco control strategy for Aotearoa to be smokefree by 2025.



Tony Ryall, National

National will continue to make health a top spending priority.

Despite the worst economic conditions in 70 years, we have put an extra average \$500 million each year into our public health service.

Our investment has helped deliver an extra 800 doctors and 2000 extra nurses, all cancer patients ready for radiation treatment are receiving it within four weeks, 91% of all two year olds are immunised and now, we're delivering an extra 27,000 elective surgeries a year.

National will continue to strengthen the health workforce, provide even faster access to elective surgery, shorter waits in Emergency Departments, faster cancer treatment and ensure even more children are immunised.

Workforce

There are now 800 extra doctors and 2000 extra nurses working in our District Health Boards compared to 2008.

We have introduced the very successful Voluntary Bonding scheme, with around 1800 medical graduates enrolled.

The scheme makes payments against a medical student's loan for every year they spend working in a hard to staff region or speciality.

Initiatives like the Rural Immersion Scheme and will help keep health professionals in our rural communities.

Health Workforce New Zealand will continue to work with the health sector

to address shortages and plan for the future.

Population health

Three of our six health targets are focused on health prevention and health promotion.

Reducing smoking, lifting immunisation rates and ensuring better checks for cardiovascular and diabetes will help improve the health of hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders.

We're rolling out the \$12 million Rheumatic Fever scheme to help reduce this third world disease in our most vulnerable communities. This will benefit around 22,000 children and reduce long-term health effects like heart problems.

Keeping people healthier goes beyond the health service. Almost 130,000 homes have been retrofitted with heating and insulation since 2008. And Whanau Ora is bringing important social services together to help provide better and more tailored support for our communities.

Maternity

Safer maternity services are a priority for this Government – that's why we put an extra \$103m over four years into improving maternity services in our first Budget, and we announced \$54 million in this year's Budget.

The Government's Maternity Quality Initiative is a major piece of work involving collaboration and strong support between the maternity sector (DHBs and clinicians, mothers and their families and colleges) and the Ministry of Health to improve safety and quality.

And, from 28 March 2012 all midwives joining the voluntary bonding scheme will be required to complete the Midwifery First Year of Practice programme.

Child health

We recently announced that free visits to the doctor for children aged under six will be extended to after-hours. This will slow the numbers of young children presenting to our busy hospital emergency departments with illnesses their GP clinic could have treated.

We have made other improvements in child health, including improved immunisation rates, better support for mothers and new babies, restoring Plunketline, more Plunket visits for first time Mums, and a strong move against rheumatic fever.

Primary care

We have increased funding for primary care by \$100 million since 2008, and National will continue to bring healthcare closer to home.

This includes increasing the number of direct referrals from GPs for diagnostic tests, engaging GPs to perform more minor surgeries and encouraging development of Integrated Family Health Centres.

National will work with the sector to ensure there is access to after-hours medical care.

We are currently trialling a scheme in Kapiti, Rangiora and Levin where ambulance services provide urgent care at home. We look at the success of these pilots with a view to rolling them in other communities.

Coordination of services

We are already working to provide greater regional and national coordination of services.

DHB's are working together on regional plans to share services; clinical leaders are driving improvement in areas like emergency departments and cardiac services. And DHBs are moving towards shared IT systems to improve services for the patient and efficiencies in our hospitals.

Health Benefits Ltd has also been established to improve procurement. We will work to ensure even greater regionalisation over the next three years.

Authorised by Tony Ryall MP, 184 Devonport Road, Tauranga



Peter Dunne, UnitedFuture

UnitedFuture believes that maintaining wellness, is fundamental to quality of life of all individuals and families and the maintenance of a strong economy. Policy therefore should be as focused on prevention as much as cure. Access to treatment should happen in a timely manner and include access to all health facilities and services across New Zealand.

It is UnitedFuture policy to:

- Enhance Prevention Services by targeting infant health concentrating on the appropriate support for parents before and after birth and ensuring high-quality extended care and support, including home visits, by lead maternity carers and Plunket; broadening community services card coverage to include subsidies for basic dental check-ups and basic procedures;

and, ensuring that every community has good after-hours services separate from Emergency Departments in hospitals.

- Encourage personal responsibility for maintaining good health by improving public education regarding the safe and effective use of quality prescription medicines, as part of UnitedFuture’s initiative, Medicines New Zealand, the National Medicines Strategy; supporting community-based education campaigns that empower parents and extended families to take responsibility for healthy eating and lifestyles; and, investigate the feasibility of a national health insurance scheme for non-trauma based disability, in particular elective surgery for the elderly.
- Ensure a viable health workforce by cutting tuition fees for those studying medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and nursing; establishing bonding schemes for graduates in fields facing workforce shortages (e.g. mental health nurses, child psychologists, pathologists, radiologists, radiographers, general practitioners, psychiatrists) into a period of service in New Zealand following graduation; directing the Ministry of Health to implement a national workforce development strategy to address both current and future long-term workforce shortages understanding that this may mean drastic changes like a doubling in the number of doctors trained; and, supporting pay parity between nursing staff across all nursing sectors.
- Improve the health system, rather than restructuring it by retaining the current basic structure of the health system, to provide stability for health professionals and consumers and to give it an opportunity to deliver; committing to the public health model so that it continues to assume the key role in the provision of vital health services; continuing to reduce waiting lists for elective surgery for those who are likely to wait longer than 6 months by requiring DHBs to contract out work to Private Hospitals; extending Mobile Surgical Services; continuing the rollout of Mobile dental clinics; requiring greater collaboration between DHBs to reduce management and operational costs particularly in the supply of goods and services, with the view to amalgamating some boards in the future if efficiency goals are not achieved; and, expanding the role of PHARMAC in the prioritisation and procurement of hospital medicines and vaccines as part of the National Medicines Strategy.
- Improve Child and Youth Health by ensuring that information about immunisation is widely circulated, including the latest international developments, to promote informed decisions by parents; continuing the roll-out of Mobile Dental Clinics; and, improving workforce development and funding available for youth-focused counselling services as the first line of defence rather than over-prescribing pharmaceuticals for mental health concerns.
- Focus on Seniors Health by introducing a free annual health check-up to all over 65s; introducing tax concessions to recognise the savings created by those who choose to take out private health insurance, or pay for private treatment, prioritising those aged over 65; and, ensuring that older people are fully consulted about their health care and are empowered to make informed choices.
- Focus on Mental Health by increasing resources for mental health professionals to ensure that those who may pose a risk to others or themselves are adequately assessed and treated; increasing the number of community-based mental health workers to ease high caseloads; funding child and youth mental health inpatient beds at a level sufficient to achieve the Blueprint for Mental Health Services in New Zealand target level; and, resourcing adolescent mental health services to include 16 to 18 year olds.

View UnitedFuture’s full health policy at <http://www.unitedfuture.org.nz/health/>