

HEALTH POLICY – SUMMARY

In Health, Labour takes a whole of government approach that recognises that reducing health inequalities will only happen with coordinated approaches covering issues that determine our health and well-being such as fairer taxation, poverty eradication, housing, employment and education.

Already announced policies such as \$15 hour minimum wage, \$5000 tax free zone, GST off fresh fruit and vegetables and extending Working For Families eligibility will have a major influence on health status.

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.

CORE COMMITMENTS

(1) A commitment to funding the sector so it can manage changing demographics and health status of New Zealanders

Health is a critical investment in New Zealanders, and is a priority for Labour in government. We cannot go on as the current government has done significantly underfunding health so that it cannot keep up with inflation or our ageing population.

(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

Changing technology offers opportunities for more efficient delivery of health services. Making sure that the sector finds and shares the benefits of the most innovative and cost-effective services is also a priority, leading to better services at a lower cost and leaving more funds for service improvements.

(3) A re-invigorated Primary Health Care strategy that emphasises accessibility, affordability and coordinated services

Primary health services are the front line of the health system. The greater investment we make in seeing that people can afford to access them, and that services are available to everyone, the better the health outcomes for people – with less strain on hospitals and other services too.

Labour will review the funding formula for primary healthcare to ensure affordable access for all, including vulnerable populations and those in rural areas.

Labour will support genuine collaboration, including through refining the PHO model, greater use of multi-disciplinary teams and nurse led services.

Labour will further investigate the DHB salaried GP option as a way of ensuring primary care is accessible in areas where services are not sufficient to meet the needs of the population.

(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

Knowing you have access to affordable after-hours medical services for your child is important for peace of mind. Labour will fund free access to these services for all children under 6. We won't cut other services to deliver this commitment.

Labour will ensure that a greater proportion of health funding is spent on children, including through increasing well child programmes, enhancing B4School checks and strengthening the Health in Schools programme.

(5) The development of nationwide tools for elective surgery prioritisation based around timeliness, equity and quality

Quality hospital services are an essential element of the health system. We need to enhance clinical networks, and create a system that avoids so-called 'postcode access' to surgery by creating nationally consistent prioritisation tools. This would mean that how much you need surgery rather than where you live will dictate when you get surgery.

(6) A 10 year plan to increase access to primary oral health care services, beginning with young people and pregnant mothers

With 44% of New Zealanders not receiving any form of dental care, a fresh approach is needed to deal with oral health care services. Labour will develop a plan, working with the sector, to incrementally roll out more affordable dental care. Pregnant women are the first priority given the link between mothers' oral health and child health.

(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

A strong health workforce is vital to a strong public health system. By improving workforce planning through Health Workforce New Zealand, and broadening its focus to take the

needs of the whole health system into account, we can make sure that future workforce needs are tackled in good time.

(8) Adequate and sustainable funding for aged care that allows “ageing in place” but also provides safe, properly staffed residential care

Labour’s approach to aged care respects the dignity of people. A broad reform agenda is required to make sure standards are met in the sector, and to make sure that staffing levels are adequate and that all staff are well trained.

(9) A co-ordinated approach to address the obesity epidemic that is costing New Zealand millions of dollars a year

A rising tide of obesity is harming people’s lifestyles, health and also costing taxpayers money. We will make sure that all parts of the health system are working together to tackle this effectively, and make sure in particular that population health services are targeting obesity.

Labour will prioritise spending on public health initiatives at local and community level, including reinstating a programme to replace the Healthy Eating, Healthy Action programme and bring back the guideline on healthy food in schools

(10) Ensuring mental health is restored as a priority for District Health Boards with appropriate targets to restore and improve mental health services

Mental health services are critical to peoples’ wellbeing, especially in times of economic stress and uncertainty. The early intervention focus and addressing inequalities at the heart of our health and social policy contributes to better mental health outcomes. We will reinstate ring-fenced funding for mental health services.