

20 September 2024

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Dear Angela and Stefni

## **MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR JOINT WASTE ASSESSMENT**

Thank you for providing a copy of the *Joint Waste Assessment Hastings and Napier 2024* in accordance with your obligations under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 to consult with the Medical Officer of Health.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora National Public Health Service (Health NZ) has statutory obligations under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 and the Health Act 1956 to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities. Of particular focus for Health NZ is embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi as its foundation toward improving health outcomes for Māori.

### **Waste management and human health impacts**

Robust waste minimisation and management processes are foundational to protecting human health. Ensuring a focus on human health impacts within both the waste assessment and the subsequent Joint Councils Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP) is critical and can be done by ensuring a focus on:

- Equitable access to strategies that promote waste minimisation practices and effective waste management.
- Reducing community exposure to dust, noise and odours which may arise from waste management facilities.
- Throughout the waste management process minimising and managing potential pests such as flies, rats and mosquitoes. These can cause nuisance and spread diseases such as rodent-driven leptospirosis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Boey K, Shiokawa K, Rajeev S. Leptospira infection in rats: A literature review of global prevalence and distribution. PLoS neglected tropical diseases. 2019 Aug 9;13(8):e0007499.

- Minimising the use of hazardous substances and ensuring that waste which is directly hazardous to human health can be disposed of in accordance with best practice.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which has co-benefits for health by reducing the negative health impacts of climate change.<sup>2</sup>

## General feedback on the Joint Waste Assessment Hastings and Napier 2024

As Medical Officer of Health, I support the approach that has been taken in the development of this assessment, and in particular want to acknowledge the willingness to include a Health NZ representative through its development stages.

I also support and commend:

- The recognition of the importance of partnership with mana whenua and the need to embrace indigenous knowledge and solutions in how we interact with and protect Te Taiao. This is especially important given the pervasive health inequities experienced by Māori and the interconnected nature between the health of Te Taiao and human health.<sup>3</sup>
- The need to focus on transitioning to a circular economy model of waste minimisation and management. This is consistent with international health-centred frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which include a call for sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12), and a focus on reducing mortality from environmental pollution (SDG 3.9).<sup>4</sup>
- The emphasis on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which will have health co-benefits by contributing to reduced climate change impacts.
- The community pre-engagement which has shown a clear community mandate for a focus on waste minimisation, a circular waste economy and recycling.
- The ongoing prioritisation of activities which centre on community engagement, education and capacity building, including targeted behaviour change programmes hosted at Te Whare Mukupara.
- The overall strategic framework outlined in the assessment which will form the foundations for the joint Hastings and Napier WMMP.

## Recommendations

Within the assessment and subsequent WMMP:

- Consider strengthening the direct focus on improving and protecting public health, including an explicit focus on considering health equity. For example, a health focus could easily be incorporated into the overall strategic vision (p. 82) as well as the evaluation criteria used for prioritisation of activities (p. 124).

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<sup>2</sup> New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine. Climate Change and Health in New Zealand: Climate Change Policy Statement. Wellington; 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Health New Zealand. Health Status Report. Wellington: 2024. Accessible at: [TeWhatuOra.govt.nz](https://www.tewhatuora.govt.nz)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. Sustainable development goals. Accessible at: [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/)

- Implementation of the waste hierarchy framework (Figure 1.3, p. 4) includes actions to “reduce, rethink, and redesign” waste out of the system. Priority should be placed on products which create waste that is directly hazardous to human health or that creates environmental pollution which indirectly impacts on human health.
- Ensure actions centred around educational activities maximise public health benefit by working alongside other public education and capacity building programmes – for example, there are synergies with educational opportunities to support whānau and communities to make healthy and sustainable food choices.

Health NZ looks forward to the journey towards strengthened waste minimisation and management within our communities, and the positive outcomes we can all create together.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



## **Bridget Wilson**

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