



Nau mai. Haere mai. Ki te pānui o RHANZ mō tēnei whiki (Te Reo for welcome to the RHANZ Newsletter for this week).

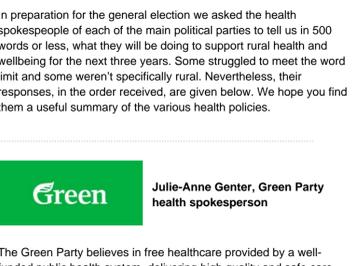
In this issue: Make your vote count for rural health plus a selection of relevant media and research articles...

Who are RHANZ?

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand represents a united voice from across multiple rural sector organisations. Our aim is to provide solutions and influence policy affecting the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

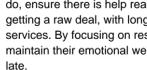
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ELECTION 2017 – WHAT WILL OUR POLITICIANS DO FOR RURAL HEALTH & WELLBEING?

In preparation for the general election we asked the health spokespersons of each of the main political parties to tell us in 500 words or less, what they will be doing to support rural health and wellbeing for the next three years.



Julie-Anne Genter, Green Party health spokesperson

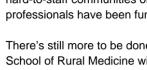
The Green Party believes in free healthcare provided by a well-funded public health system, delivering high quality and safe care, which everyone can access in a timely way.

The health sector has been starved of billions of dollars in funding since the National Government was elected. We will get health funding back on track, including for our rural communities.

One specific thing we will do to improve equity is fund the National Travel Assistance scheme properly. We don't think the scheme is fit for purpose. Criteria are too strict and funding is definitely too short to meet the needs of those without easy access to a main centre.

Our young people need a functioning mental health system. The Green Party will introduce free counselling for under 25s to equip young people with the life skills they need to deal with life's ups and downs.

We need to end the stigma and shame for our young people around emotional wellbeing, encourage people to speak up, and when they do, ensure there is help readily available.



Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman - National Spokesperson for Health

The rural sector is the backbone of our economy and we believe in the ability of our rural communities to tackle the tough issues and to get ahead, backed by a Government that supports them.

National is committed to providing provide high quality health services to our rural communities. In our time in Government we've focussed on providing innovative new models of care closer to home.

Increased mental health support in rural regions has been a key focus for this Government. Work continues on a joint Health and Primary Industries Ministers initiative to support farmers with mental health issues.

National has increased the number of GP training positions - from 69 doctors entering the programme in 2007, to 184 in 2016/17. To do this we've got a number of programmes in place including the Voluntary Bonding Scheme which incentivises graduates to work in hard-to-staff communities or specialties.

There's still more to be done. National will also establish a new School of Rural Medicine within the next three years to produce more doctors for our rural communities.

National will also make it easier for 600,000 low-income New Zealanders to visit their GP before a condition deteriorates by offering Community Services Card holders cheap GP visits capped at \$18.

As well as getting access to cheap GP visits, thousands more rural New Zealanders with lower incomes and high housing costs will also receive the other benefits of the Community Services Card.

We will also increase the number of elective surgeries to 200,000 a year over the next four years, at a cost of \$30m a year rising to \$120m in year four.

Lastly, the most important thing we'll do for the wellbeing of rural communities is grow jobs and incomes and tackle challenges, rather than imposing new taxes which will stall the economy and punish hardworking New Zealanders.

New Zealanders now have a very clear choice between two very different visions for New Zealand this election. National has a plan to keep New Zealand moving forward – a confident plan for a confident and growing country.



Marama Fox, Maori Party Spokesperson for Health

The Māori Party will implement a range of policies that embody a Whānau Ora approach to addressing social, economic and cultural needs and aspirations.

We want to continue with free GP visits and dental care (including after hours and weekends) for those under 18 years as well as removing the prescription charges for low income whānau and fully subsidise all prescriptions for over 65 year olds and under 18 year olds.

Other policies include:

- Free prescription glasses and hearing aids for low income whānau in need
Free annual medical and dental visit for over 55 year olds
Increase in the number of mobile health clinics in rural communities
Resurrect the Drinking Water Supply Fund, and delegate Te Puni Kōkiri to support rural, isolated rural communities to gain access to a drinkable water supply
Increase in Kaupapa Māori:

- mental health residential centres and community-based programmes
community-led based birthing centres, antenatal, maternity and postnatal care facilities and programmes
hospice services, homecare services and programmes to support terminally ill patients and their whānau
Explore the rollout of iMOKO nationwide
Screen for gout when assessing for other conditions such as diabetes and heart disease amongst Māori and Pacific communities

Rheumatic Fever

- Expand on the door-knocking campaign to educate aiga Pacific on the causes of rheumatic fever and other skin diseases
Increase the investment in the prevention of rheumatic fever such as insulating low income homes, ensuring Housing New Zealand homes have a bach or extra rooms to address over-crowding
Subsidise power bills for households who members have rheumatic fever

Suicide

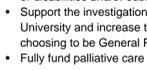
- Resource whānau to be equipped to work together and develop their own solutions to suicide in both prevention, post-vention and health promotion approaches (Waka Hourua Māori and Pasifika suicide prevention)
Resource and implement the Turamarama Declaration
Expand Oranga Rangatahi – the Rangatahi Suicide Prevention Strategy
Increase funding for support services to individuals who are experiencing distress

Healthy kai

- Remove GST off fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and milk
Introduce labels on drinks and processed foods that have the number of teaspoons of sugar they contain, clearly marked in large print

Wellbeing & Cost of Living

- Expand services for SuperGold card holders
Free annual health and free annual dental check for all people aged over 60 years
Fully subsidised prescriptions for everyone over 60 years of age
Free bi-annual eyesight checks for everyone over 60 years of age
Increase financial support to enable whānau to care for kaumātua so they can remain with their whānau (if they choose to) and better support kaumātua who are struggling with rising living costs
Increase navigators for Whānau Ora and other support workers connecting and engaging with our elderly, to provide a safe support network to prevent elder abuse
Establish specialised Māori led elderly residential care facilities, medical and support services



Ria Bond, Associate Health Spokesperson for NZ First

BETTER COMMUNITY HEALTH

- Establish a public health compact stipulating the guaranteed minimum services the public can expect from the public health system and its overlap with the private sector.
Ensure the nationwide health screening of all children under one year.
Provide dental care to every pre-school and school child.
Improve residential services for people who have severe illnesses or disabilities and/or substance abuse problems.
Support the investigation of a third Medical School at Waikato University and increase the number of medical professionals choosing to be General Practitioners, especially in rural areas.
Fully fund palliative care services.

AGED CARE

- Introduce three annual SuperGold Health Checks with a GP.
Conduct a review into aged-care sector, including the funding of rest homes particularly after pay-equity.
Remove income and asset testing for older people needing long stay aged hospital care services.
Ensure that subsidies are automatically adjusted for CPI inflation.
Implement national standards for aged home care that are appropriately monitored and enforced.

GPS AND HOSPITALS

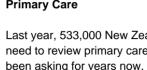
- Review funding of Primary Health Organisations.
Establish and implement a national strategy for addressing cancer treatment.
Fully fund and provide world leading maternity-care services (especially in the regions).
Develop a national rural and provincial health services DNA.
Provide funding to assist modern diagnostic equipment like DXA scans for women over 50 years who have experienced a low trauma fracture related to osteoporosis.
Adequately resource elective surgery and provide additional waiting times funding so as to firmly establish guaranteed maximum waiting times for a range of surgical and specialist treatment.

THE HEALTH SYSTEM

- Review the number of District Health Boards (DHBs) and establish a ratio of practitioners to administrators to keep the focus on health not bureaucracy.
Increase mental health service options and treatment bed numbers especially around child and youth mental health services.
Re-establish the Mental Health Commission to fund, control and direct mental health services.
Commit to a suicide reduction target.
Cap the number of places at medical training institutions which can be taken by foreign students at the expense of New Zealand students.
Use a range of measures to ensure the adequate recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural areas.
Require consistency in the provision of emergency health services such as ambulance and helicopter services and ensure the adequate funding of a core of fulltime employees and support for volunteers.
Review the National Travel Assistance Policy with the aim of ensuring it is adequately providing transport assistance to those who cannot easily access hospital medical appointments.
Review Pharmac's funding policy.
Make foreign patients within our public health system pay their fair share.

TAKING HEALTH FORWARD

- Provide equality of funding for all family home carers.
Increase longitudinal data collection in health like a perinatal database.
Increasing Research & Development to 2% of GDP over 10-years will help to boost biomedical research.
Explore options associated with boosting uptake of private health insurance, including the provision of tax rebates for those with private health insurance.
Change Pharmac's legislation and provide funding to treat people with life-limiting and rare conditions (1,10,000 persons).
Ensure the transition to Electronic Health Records so that PHOs, DHB's and private providers have access to patient records.



David Clark, Health Spokesperson, Labour Party.

We have focused on broader national policies but many of them will have a rural health focus to them to address core inequities of access:

Overall

Labour is going to invest in an additional \$8 billion in our health system over the next four years on top of National's projected spending. We are going to meet the costs of a growing, aging population and inflation which National has failed to do, leaving a \$2.3 billion gap of health funding since 2009/10. Our hospitals are in dire need of support and resources.

Warm, dry, health housing

Labour will set standards that will require all rental properties to meet proper standards in: insulation, heating, ventilation, draught stopping, and drainage. This will ensure people who live in them don't get sick. We will assist homeowners and landlords to make their houses warm and healthy to live in with grants of up to \$2,000 towards upgrading insulation and heating. Labour is able to fund this by closing a speculators' tax loophole that will save taxpayers around \$150 million a year once fully implemented. Total savings in the first ten years will be \$1.2 billion. Labour will use this money to help families insulate and heat their homes to modern standards.

Primary Care

Last year, 533,000 New Zealanders did not visit a GP due to cost. We need to review primary care funding with the sector, as they have been asking for years now, to ensure funding is better targeted for low income and high needs patients. This work will begin straight away, but in the meantime we want to make sure that barrier is not an issue for New Zealanders so while this review is taking place, we are going to fund a \$10 reduction off all GP visits, starting in July. But we acknowledge the cost pressures faced by the sector so we are going provide an additional \$2 per consult to help cover costs beginning in January.

In terms of workforce, Labour is going to increase the number of funded GP places to 300 a year over the next three years. And will work with the sector to look at how we can incentivise rural placement including a National Rural School of Medicine.

National Cancer Agency

We want to make sure that all New Zealanders can access the same standard of cancer care no matter where they live. The Government's Faster Cancer Treatment target only covers 25% of the 23,000 patients diagnosed with cancer each year. Labour is going to establish a National Cancer Agency which will implement standard treatment pathways for cancer care in all DHBs, and ensuring DHBs have the resources they need to deliver this. This will include overseeing the bowel screening programme to ensure district health boards actually have the resources they need to roll out the programme consistently.

National Travel Assistance Scheme

A huge part in addressing inequities is ensuring that there is a reasonable subsidy for travel costs. Labour will review the National Travel Assistance scheme with a view to increase subsidies and make the criteria to access subsidies easier. One of the options will be to look at bringing the scheme back into the Ministry of Health to make sure that it is consistently being applied. We haven't seen a substantial increase in subsidies since 2009. Mileage and accommodation subsidies do not cover the actual costs of travel and the costs to stay at a motel/hotel. Rural GP referrals that have been accepted by a DHB with specialist consultation should be considered eligible for the subsidy.

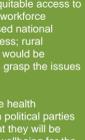
Mental Health

In Labour's first 100 days, we will initiate a mental health and addiction services to identify gaps in services and where we need to focus our resourcing and provide additional support. Labour will extend School Based Health Services in all public secondary schools and ensure all schools have a comprehensive youth health service. Evidence shows schools where students had access to a health professionals who were on-site as part of a collaborative team had better mental health outcomes. Depression and suicide risk were lower by up to two-thirds. Labour will also rollout the primary mental health team model of in-house talking therapies and wrap around social service support in eight sites across the country.

Rebuild Dunedin Hospital

Labour will fund the rebuild of Dunedin Hospital at a central city site out of the Government's normal capital allowance, and rule out using a PPP. We have also committed a million dollar contribution for the rebuild of Maniototo Hospital and we have ruled out using PPP for the new Buller Health Centre and will fund it to be rebuilt on the existing hospital site.

Making your vote count for rural health & wellbeing



In six days' time we have the opportunity to vote for our next government. Given that there are at least 600,000 of us living in rural NZ – equivalent to our second largest city – we are a vitally important constituency from both an economic and political perspective.

Our Rural Health Road Map outlines what needs to be done if we are to grow healthy rural communities in New Zealand. The five priorities are gaining traction across our membership and industry groups which is really pleasing. Last week I was particularly chuffed to read Bryan Gibson's editorial titled "Rural measures are life and death issues".

This is a most perceptive piece of writing from someone whose day job – editor of The NZ Farmers Weekly – is quite removed from the health sector. In his article, Bryan manages to touch on all five priorities of our Road Map: equitable access to rural health services; rural health workforce (including reference to the proposed national school of rural health); rural wellness; rural research and rural connectivity. It would be pleasing to see our policy makers grasp the issues as clearly.

To this end, we recently asked the health spokespersons of each of the main political parties to tell us in 500 words or less what they will be doing to support rural health and wellbeing for the next three years. Their responses, in the order received, are featured in our Lead Story.

We will be seeking meetings with lead politicians as soon as the election dust has settled and we are looking at bringing RuralFest NZ forward to February next year. We'll be convening named representatives for their availability for a range of dates shortly. Membership lives for the 2017-2018 year will be issued later this week so please look out for them. There is much to do.

To quote Bryan Gibson, "when your neighbour or mate is not metres away but kilometres, connections are vital. It's more than just keeping businesses running, though that's important. It's about keeping people alive."

Let's not lose sight of this at the ballot box.

Happy informed voting 2017!

Best wishes always, Michelle

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Member Column

Would you like to contribute an article for our newsletter? Tell a story about yourself or one of your members or something you're passionate about. Email your item to Michelle.ca@rhaanz.org.nz

Media Watch

Rural mental health: There in the tough times

The sudden death of 2017 Hawke's Bay Farmer of the Year, Paul "Bulch" Ranton last month rocked the rural community and has put the health and wellbeing of our farmers under the spotlight.

Over the past month or two, the Hawke's Bay Rural Support Team have been steadily busy providing support and a helping hand to a number of farmers who have been in need of assistance. (The Country)

Read more

What it's like living without a cellphone signal

Elle Armon-Jones has 60 international film crew making a TV series on her property just 35 kilometres from Auckland. None of them can use their cellphones.

Her property and conference centre, Vineyard Cottages, in the Waikoukou Valley, near Kumeu, sits in a mobile blackspot. "They're walking around shaking their phones, staring at them," says Armon-Jones, who has to live with the daily frustration of not being able to use her phone and dealing with a slow internet. (Stuff)

Read more

Rural community fights for cell phone and internet connection

As the traveller turns off State Highway 2 at Oringi, south of Dannevirke, the cellphone coverage hovers around three or four bars. Further down the road they start to disappear and have gone completely 10 minutes later when the Manawatu River bridge is crossed and the road winds towards Kumeu.

This isn't unusual for thousands of rural roads around the country. Farmers all over New Zealand put up with landlines reminiscent of the 1980s and satellite broadband costing a small fortune. (NZ Farmer)

Read more

Under the Knife and On the Go - New Zealand's Surgical Bus

Don't call Jim Wilson a bus driver - he is one of three steer-olegists who drive New Zealand's mobile surgical bus the length and breadth of the country.

For 15 years, the 'operating theatre on wheels' has been rolling into rural towns to deliver health care. Almost 22,000 procedures have been carried out on board. (Country Life, Radio NZ)

Read more

Community hospital leads in rural health delivery

On September 8, 1997, Dannevirke's Community Hospital was opened after turbulent time of protest against the closure of our 180-bed hospital.

The Friends of the Hospital had been working very hard to maintain the status quo and save the old hospital on the hill and at the height of the protests, the hands around the campaign made national news.

community and some weren't happy, but a year on from the opening of the new community hospital, everyone, especially those in Dannevirke, were very happy. Tararua Health Group chief executive Sharon Wards said. (Rural News)

Read more

First towns get all ambulances double-crewed

Taupo, Turangi and Te Awamutu will be the first towns to benefit from the Government's commitment to have two staff on every road ambulance.

Health Minister Jonathan Coleman announced today that the three towns would be first to benefit from the roll out and had already hired eight emergency medical assistants for Taupo and Turangi and another four for Te Awamutu. (NZ Herald)

Read more

Tauramunui workforce issues help drive thousands to ED, not GP

A lack of GPs and reliance on short-term locums is part of the problem driving nearly the equivalent of the town's population to ED at Tauramunui Hospital in one year. Last year, 5886 patients attended the Tauramunui Hospital ED and 4920 of them were in the lowest level of acuity.

A large chunk of those patient could have seen a GP instead. Waikato DHB director community and southern rural health services Jill Dibble says. (NZ Doctor - subscriber only)

Read more

Far North mental health service coordinator Roberta Kaio awarded \$3000 scholarship

This year's recipient of the Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) Access Community Health Scholarship is Roberta Kaio, from Ahipara in the Far North.

Roberta is of Ngāi Tahu ki Whangaroa and Ngāpuhi Nui Tānu descent and works as a Primary Mental Health Coordinator for a mobile nursing team with Te Hiku Hauora. She will use the scholarship funds towards her Masters of Nursing at the University of Auckland. (RWNZ)

Read more

A very good move

Any initiative that helps train health professionals ready and willing to work in rural communities is good, says Michelle Thompson, chief executive of Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHAANZ). (Rural News)

Read more

Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year Nominations Open 11 Sept

Dairy Women's Network is putting the call out for the next inspiring industry leader. Nominations open for the 2016 Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year Award on 11 September.

This is the seventh year for the prestigious award which celebrates the outstanding leadership of women in the industry of dairy.

Dairy Women's Network chair Cathy Brown says the network has a proud history of celebrating the success of women and leadership in the dairy industry. (Scoop)

Read more

Events Watch

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