



## Minister of Health

### **Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey**

11 June 2024

These documents have been proactively released by the Ministry of Health on behalf of the Minister of Health Hon Dr Shane Reti.

#### **Title of Cabinet paper:**

- Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey

#### **Title of minutes:**

- LEG-24-MIN-0047 – Minute of Decision: Government Response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey
- CAB-24-MIN-0110 – Minute of Decision: Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 29 March 2024
- Letter from Hon Dr Shane Reti to Eye Health Aotearoa

#### **Title of briefings:**

- H2023033385 – Responding to the Petitions Committee’s recommendations on the petition of Eye Health Aotearoa
- H2024036854 – Cabinet paper: Responding to the Petitions Committee’s Recommendations on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa
- H2024038256 – Responding to the Petitions Committee’s Recommendations on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

#### **Key to redaction code/s:**

- Out of scope of this proactive release.
- S 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.
- S 9(2)(g)(i) to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers and officers and employees of any public service agency.



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

---

*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

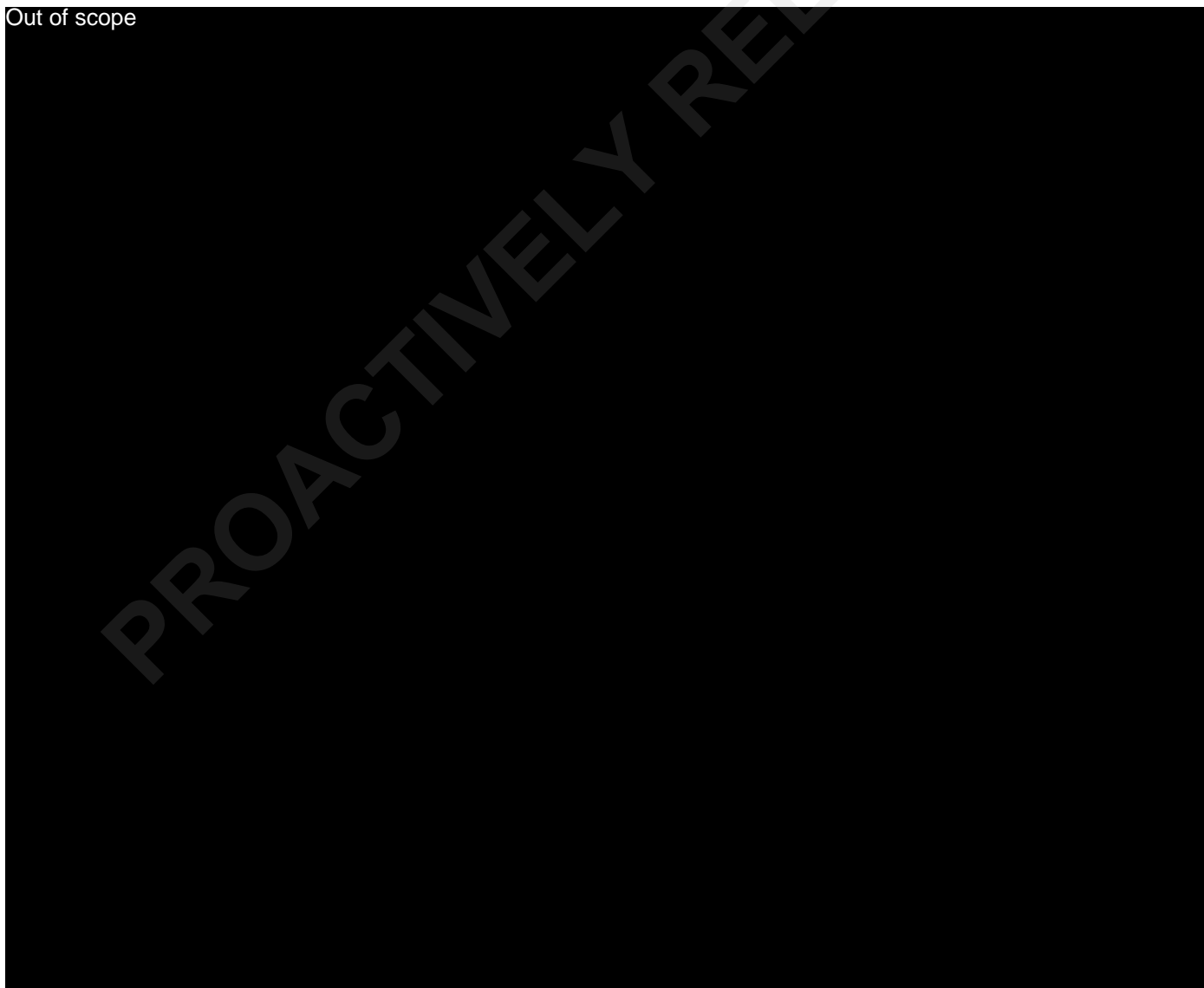
---

### Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 29 March 2024

On 2 April 2024, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 29 March 2024:


LEG-24-MIN-0047      **Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey**      CONFIRMED  
Portfolio: Health

Out of scope



PROACTIVELY RELEASED

Out of scope



Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

PROACTIVELY RELEASED



# Cabinet Legislation Committee

## Minute of Decision

---

*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

---

### Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey

Portfolio                      Health

On 28 March 2024, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1        **noted** that on 8 August 2023, the Petitions Committee presented its report to the House on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey;
- 2        **noted** that the Petitions Committee recommended that the Government consider expanding the University of Auckland survey or the New Zealand Health Survey to ensure more comprehensive data can be gathered;
- 3        **approved** the Government response, attached to the submission under LEG-24-SUB-0047, to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey;
- 4        **invited** the Minister of Health to present the Government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 252;
- 5        **invited** the Minister of Health to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Rebecca Davies  
Committee Secretary

---

**Attendance: see over**

**Present:**

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Hon Brooke van Velden  
Hon Shane Jones  
Hon Chris Bishop (Chair)  
Hon Dr Shane Reti  
Hon Simeon Brown  
Hon Erica Stanford  
Hon Paul Goldsmith  
Hon Nicole Mckee  
Hon Casey Costello  
Hon Penny Simmonds  
Hon Simon Watts  
Hon Chris Penk  
Hon Scott Simpson, MP  
Todd Stevenson, MP  
Jamie Arbuckle, MP

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Leader of the House  
Officials Committee for LEG

PROACTIVELY RELEASED

## **Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey**

### **Proposal**

- 1 This paper seeks approval of the Government response to the Petitions Committee petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey.

### **Background**

- 2 In September 2022, Eye Health Aotearoa submitted a petition calling on the Government to fund the first ever Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey. Eye Health Aotearoa submitted that an eye health survey would provide essential data about New Zealanders' eye health and that this data could be used to identify ways to reduce avoidable blindness and low vision and reduce eye health inequity.
- 3 The petitioners said that New Zealand:
  - 3.1 currently does not have data to support understanding of the prevalence and severity of eye health conditions and current estimates rely on international research;
  - 3.2 does not have adequate evidence to support efficient and effective eye health services and prevent avoidable vision loss;
  - 3.3 has a unique context and population makeup that is not appropriately represented in international data or research.
- 4 In February 2023, the Ministry of Health was invited to prepare a written submission on the petition. Key points of the Ministry's submission included:
  - 4.1 recognition of the importance of good, timely eye health care for all New Zealanders and Eye Health Aotearoa's advocacy to collect data to support this;
  - 4.2 agreement that a national population eye health survey has potential to quantify unmet need for access and care, and to provide insight on opportunities for system improvement.
  - 4.3 highlighting that in August 2022, the University of Auckland has received funding from the Health Research Council to conduct New Zealand's first population-based eye, ear and foot health survey to fill the evidence gap and improve equitable access to health services.

- 4.4 questions related to eye health could be considered for the New Zealand Health Survey's long-term conditions module in the future.
- 5 Responding to the Ministry's submission on the petition, Eye Health Aotearoa outlined that it did not believe the University of Auckland's survey, or the New Zealand Health Survey are sufficient to meet the information needs. Specifically, they noted that:
- 5.1 the University of Auckland survey was not specific to eye health and is being undertaken in specific geographic areas (selected for their higher concentration of Māori and Pacific populations), which do not reflect the national population;
- 5.2 the New Zealand Health Survey would not provide the same level of detail as a national eye health survey as it would not include a comprehensive eye exam;
- 5.3 surveys without eye exams are not sufficient to fill the information gap, as they cannot identify asymptomatic disease.

### **The Petitions Committee's findings**

- 6 The petition was considered by the Petitions Committee (the Committee) between November 2022 and August 2023. In its final report, delivered in August 2023, the Committee recommended that: *the Government consider expanding the University of Auckland survey or the New Zealand Health Survey to ensure more comprehensive data can be gathered.*

### **Comment on the Petitions Committee findings and recommendations**

- 7 Increasing the availability of data and evidence to underpin policy will require prioritisation of information needs and gaps, exploration of alternative approaches to meeting these needs, and planned, coordinated and sustained investment.
- 8 Alongside eye health, there are other longstanding health information needs not currently being met (including mental health and addiction, nutrition, unmet secondary elective healthcare needs and seroprevalence). These needs vary in nature and complexity, and the extent to which current infrastructure or data collection approaches are able to support meeting them effectively.
- 9 Meeting any of these needs would likely require reprioritisation of funding or new investment. Recognising current fiscal conditions, and the need to address information needs strategically and sustainably, I recommend eye health information needs are considered as part of work to address health information needs more broadly.

### **Timing of the Government response**

- 10 In accordance with Standing Orders, the Government response to the Petitions Committee report was due by 23 February 2024.

## Consultation

11 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been consulted.

## Financial implications

12 There are no financial implications associated with this proposal.

## Publicity

13 There are no identified publicity implications associated with this proposal.

## Proactive Release

14 I intend to proactively release this paper following the presentation of the Government response to the House of Representatives. The release will be subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

## Recommendations

The Minister of Health recommends that the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **note** that on 8 August 2023 the Petitions Committee presented its report to the House on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey;
- 2 **note** that the Petitions Committee recommended that the Government consider expanding the University of Auckland survey or the New Zealand Health Survey to ensure more comprehensive data can be gathered;
- 3 **approve** the Government response, attached to this submission, to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey;
- 4 **invite** the Minister of Health to present the Government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 252;
- 5 **invite** the Minister of Health to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Dr Shane Reti

Minister of Health

IN CONFIDENCE



**Government Response to  
Report of Petitions Committee  
on the  
Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand  
Eye Health Survey**

**Presented to the House of Representatives**

**In accordance with Standing Order 252**

# **Government response to Report of Petitions Committee on the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey**

## **Introduction**

- 1 The Government has carefully considered the Petitions Committee's report on the petition of Eye Health Aotearoa: Fund the Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey.
- 2 The Government welcomes the Committee's report, and the time it spent considering what is a key information need for New Zealand's health system. The Government also acknowledges Eye Health Aotearoa's advocacy for quality and timely eye health care for all New Zealanders.
- 3 The Government responds to the report in accordance with Standing Order 252.
- 4 The Government has considered the Committee's recommendations and agrees that improved information on eye health is important. However, the Government considers that the need for eye health information should be assessed alongside other key, long-standing health information needs to support a systematic, strategic, and sustainable approach to addressing these needs over time.

## **Recommendations and Government response**

### **Recommendation 1:**

- 5 That the Government consider expanding the University of Auckland survey or the New Zealand Health Survey to ensure more comprehensive data can be gathered.

### **Response:**

- 6 In August 2022, the University of Auckland received funding from the Health Research Council to conduct New Zealand's first population-based eye, ear, and foot health survey. Co-funding for the survey came from Eye Health Aotearoa representatives, including Blind Low Vision NZ and the Association of Optometrists.
- 7 While helpful, the breadth, specificity, and technical elements of eye health information needs mean that current administrative data sources and existing surveys (including the University of Auckland's survey) are unable to meet the full extent of the information need.
- 8 A specific and targeted survey that reflects the complex nature of eye health, that is not constrained by interview length or the content limits of existing surveys, may be required.

- 9 There are options for how this might be executed (e.g., targeting populations at higher risk of poorer eye health outcomes, sample pooling over several years). However, any new survey would require reprioritisation of funding or new investment.
- 10 Recognising current fiscal conditions, as well as other longstanding health information needs (including mental health and addiction, nutrition, and unmet secondary elective healthcare needs), the Government will consider eye health information needs as part of work to address health information needs more broadly.

## **Conclusion**

- 11 Up to date data, evidence, and insights are critical underpinnings of policy that delivers timely, effective, and cost-effective interventions targeted towards those with the highest needs and greatest capacity to benefit.
- 12 Increasing the availability of data and evidence to underpin policy will require prioritisation of information needs and gaps, exploration of alternative approaches to meeting these needs, and planned, coordinated and sustained investment.
- 13 While the Government recognises the need for improved information on eye health, there are a number of other information needs not currently being met. Given the breadth of these needs, the Minister of Health will direct the Ministry of Health to develop and present options for how information needs might be met.
- 14 In this work, different methods and sources will be explored, as well as how investment might be timed (taking into consideration any decisions related to how Vote Health could be appropriated).



17 APR 2024

Eye Health Aotearoa  
info@eyehealthaotearoa.org.nz

Tēnā koe,

## Government Response to the Petition of Eye Health Aotearoa

Thank you for your petition of September 2022 calling on the Government to fund the first ever Aotearoa New Zealand Eye Health Survey. I appreciate you taking the time to highlight the need for improved data on the prevalence of eye conditions and data that better reflects New Zealand's unique context and population.

Following consideration of your petition, the Petitions Committee recommended:

*That the Government consider expanding the University of Auckland survey or the New Zealand Health Survey to ensure more comprehensive data can be gathered.*

The Government has carefully considered the Petition Committee's recommendation and I presented a response to this to the House of Representatives on 5 April 2024. We agree that improved information on eye health is important. Up to date data, evidence, and insights are critical to ensure we deliver timely, effective, and cost-effective interventions and services.

However, the Government considers that the need for eye health information should be assessed alongside other key, long-standing health information needs. Considering a broad range of needs will allow us to develop a systematic approach to addressing information needs over time. I have asked the Ministry of Health to develop and present options for how we can invest strategically and sustainably in health information needs, including those related to eye health.

It is clear you put substantial work into the petition. I thank you for this work, and your continued advocacy for equitable, quality eye health services to prevent avoidable vision loss. I have enclosed a copy of the response to this letter for your information.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Reti'.

Hon Dr Shane Reti  
**Minister of Health**