

# Hon Simeon Brown

Minister of Health  
Minister for State Owned Enterprises  
Minister for Auckland



16 April 2025

Ms Rae Lamb  
Chair  
Health Quality and Safety Commission

By email to: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Rae,

I am aware of the critical role the Health Quality and Safety Commission (HQSC) plays as an independent and expert monitor of the quality and safety of care across New Zealand's health system. By measuring and monitoring the quality and safety of services to lead improvement within the health system, your work supports everyone to experience health services that meet their health needs and aspirations. HQSC's work with clinicians, providers and consumers to improve health and disability support service will mean fewer people harmed, more lives saved, and financial savings within the sector. This role is an enduring one under any government.

As you will be aware, this Government is committed to improving health outcomes by providing New Zealanders with timely access to high-quality services, delivered by a financially sustainable health system.

I recently announced my priorities and a *Health Delivery Plan* to make immediate improvements to the delivery of health services to New Zealanders.

My key areas of focus are:

- getting Health New Zealand (Health NZ) back to basics;
- driving shorter stays in emergency departments;
- getting on top of the elective surgery backlog;
- enabling faster access to primary care;
- setting out a long-term health infrastructure programme; and
- streamlining accountability mechanisms, statutory and regulatory settings to drive performance.

A number of the above areas of focus align strongly with the work that HQSC does to ensure that New Zealanders receive better, safer health care. I know that you and the HQSC will use your role in monitoring and reporting on health care quality and safety, in partnering with patients and families to ensure care is person-centred and in delivering research, education and best practice guidance to our health workforce to support me in delivering on these priorities.

My overarching expectation is that HQSC supports the health system to be relentless in its pursuit of the delivery of more and better health services for New Zealanders. In doing so, I expect HQSC to put patient need at the heart of every decision it makes and to prioritise quality and safe care based on clinical need, not race.

I expect that HQSC will focus on:

- **Strengthened monitoring:** HQSC has an important independent role as a monitoring agency with a mandate to look across the sector. I would like to see you strengthen your relationships with other agencies that capture patient safety data, including ACC and the Health and Disability Commissioner, with a view to broadening your monitoring role. Formalising these relationships and agreeing how to ensure best use of the data captured should be reflected in a refreshed memorandum of understanding between these agencies and the Ministry of Health, with a view to enabling frontline agencies to deliver on this Government's health targets.
- **Reporting on health targets:** As noted above, I expect HQSC to utilise its data to support comprehensive reporting against health targets. I am working to include a primary care target, with a focus on improving access, and extending the role of after-hours and urgent care. This will include 24/7 access through digital technology. I expect the HQSC to channel the perspectives and experiences of consumers to drive delivery improvement, particularly in relation to the health targets. This will include the next steps with the Patient-Reported Outcome Measures work to support understanding of what preventive health care services people want to engage with and what is their experience.
- **Delivery of an Electives Boost:** I have directed Health NZ to implement initiatives to urgently lift the volume of surgeries to reduce the elective treatment wait list. I expect that HQSC will work closely with Health NZ to ensure there is sufficient monitoring of clinical quality and safety on the programme of elective treatments with regular reporting. I have asked Health NZ to provide me with weekly updates which I would expect you to contribute to.
- s 9(2)(f)(iv)
- **Strengthening clinical decision-making:** I expect HQSC to strengthen the role of the National Quality Forum to drive accountability for quality and safety and ensuring alignment with Health NZ's clinical senate and leadership model. This will support improvements to clinical governance across the health entities.
- **Fiscal responsibility:** Maintaining delivery on your statutory obligations and objectives in an effective, efficient and fiscally responsible manner will be critical in an environment where health resources are finite, and taxpayers and consumers of health services have high expectations of performance.

I look forward to your response to this request and to continuing our collaborative efforts to improve health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simeon Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Simeon" and the last name "Brown" clearly distinguishable.

Hon Simeon Brown  
**Minister of Health**

Copy to: Audrey Sonerson, Director-General, Ministry of Health

PROACTIVELY RELEASED