

Hon Simeon Brown

Minister of Health
Minister for State Owned Enterprises
Minister for Auckland



16 April 2025

Professor Lester Levy
Chair
Health Research Council

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

Dear Lester,

As you are 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.

I know that you and the Health Research Council (HRC) will support me in ensuring that these areas of focus are strongly positioned in the HRC's work programme.

My overarching expectation is that we are relentless in our pursuit of the delivery of more and better health services for New Zealanders. In doing so, I expect all health entities to put patient need at the heart of every decision made and to prioritise their efforts on the basis of need, not race.

The HRC sits between the health and science, research, and technology sectors and must use this position to:

- **Deliver public value:** I expect the HRC to work with Health New Zealand and other health services to drive research that maximises the benefit for healthcare delivery. Specifically, I would like HRC to prioritise research that supports new models of care and treatments, and promotes innovation and efficiencies, to improve outcomes for patients and strengthen value for public investment. I am keen that research is targeted on improving our health system and directly addressing known issues, and does not duplicate research already undertaken overseas.

I ask that HRC consider how my priorities are clearly demonstrated in investments from the Health Research Fund. I would also like HRC to consider measures that would expedite the processes of its ethics and regulatory committees, ensuring timely advancement and

implementation of crucial health research projects, while maintaining robust ethical standards.

- **Facilitate research investment opportunities:** I expect the HRC will prioritise research that has a pathway to commercialisation. This will ensure the HRC is well placed to respond to the science reforms and contribute to growing the economy.
- **Foster innovation:** The HRC needs to take a leadership role in fostering innovation in healthcare, including facilitating research partnerships internationally. Aligned with improvements to the delivery of timely, quality health services, the HRC should highlight where innovation and technology can shift inefficient and ineffective healthcare models and practices to those that lift and strengthen the performance of the health system. It will also need to build stronger connections between researchers and innovators to support our efforts to address the health challenges we face now and in the future.
- **Importance of clinical research:** While the HRC has a role to develop the health research workforce, it needs to pay particular attention to the enhanced development of clinician researchers, including to support building and maintaining a clinical trials network and developing a learning health system. We must play our part in ensuring we have the necessary infrastructure in place in New Zealand to contribute to high-quality, internationally recognised clinical research. I expect the HRC to work closely with Health New Zealand in developing the wider research workforce and building a learning system.

Your continued focus on delivering 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 would like to receive regular reports on the impact of the HRC's work to deliver on these priorities. I encourage you to work with the Ministries of Health and Business, Innovation, and Employment on your reporting of progress.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

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,



Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Health

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