

In Confidence

Offices of the Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health

Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Adopting the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) (3 Day Postnatal Stay) Amendment Bill as a Government Bill

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to adopt the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) (3 Day Postnatal Stay) Amendment Bill as a Government Bill.

Relationship to government priorities

- 2 The Government is committed to providing timely access to quality healthcare for all. This includes ensuring women and their babies receive safe and appropriate support and care where and when they need it.
- 3 This commitment is reinforced in the National | New Zealand First Coalition Agreement which contains a commitment to “ensure proper funding for birthing units and maternity care, including providing for a three day stay for new mothers”.
- 4 The Government Policy Statement on Health 2024–2027 also sets an expectation on expanding the choices of maternity and early years' services.

Background

- 5 The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) (3 Day Postnatal Stay) Amendment Bill (the Bill) is a Member's Bill standing in the name of Catherine Wedd, MP for Tukituki.
- 6 The stated intent of the Bill is to allow women who have given birth the choice of receiving inpatient postnatal care for 72 hours if desired, on the basis that giving mothers this extra time and flexibility will result in positive outcomes for mother, baby, and family.
- 7 The Bill was first read on 17 December 2024 and referred to the Health Select Committee. Public submissions on the Bill opened on 18 December and closed on 17 February 2025. The Ministry of Health advised the Committee.
- 8 The Committee recommended the Bill progress without amendment.

Intentions of the Bill

- 9 The Bill proposes to give women a legal entitlement to a minimum of 72 hours of inpatient postnatal care following childbirth, regardless of clinical need. This entitlement would apply to all women who give birth allowing them to remain in

hospital for up to 72 hours from the time of delivery or admission to inpatient postnatal care.

- 10 The Bill would also make it mandatory for mothers to be advised of their postnatal care choices by their lead maternity carer and require Health New Zealand to ensure sufficient maternity facilities are available in each locality to meet the new entitlement.
- 11 This Government supports the intent of the Bill. Adopting it as a Government Bill will enable us to take a constructive approach and broader view of the options available to improve postnatal care services for all mothers.
- 12 Further work will need to be undertaken on how to support the implementation of the Bill, and potentially changes to strengthen the Bill. Feedback on the Bill indicates that its implementation would have significant implications for the maternity care system, including impacts on the workforce. As a Government Bill, implementation planning will be appropriately considered, resourced, and monitored.

Consultation

- 13 The following agencies and Crown entities were consulted on this paper: Treasury, Ministry of Social Development, Social Investment Agency, Ministry for Women, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, Ministry of Education, Te Puni Kōkiri – Ministry of Māori Development, and Health New Zealand.

Rationale for adopting the Bill as a Government Bill

- 14 We propose that the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) (3 Day Postnatal Stay) Amendment Bill be adopted by the Government as a Government Bill.
- 15 Adopting the Bill as a Government Bill will:
 - 15.1 Signal strong Government commitment to improving maternal and infant health outcomes, aligned to the intent of the National | New Zealand First Coalition agreement; and
 - 15.2 Ensure the Bill is progressed with the necessary policy, financial, and operational support to achieve its intended outcomes, including equitable access and sustainable service delivery.
- 16 The proposed conversion of the Bill from a Member's Bill to a Government Bill is a procedural step. This change does not alter the policy intent or content of the Bill, which has already been considered by the Health Committee.

Financial implications

9(2)(f)(iv), 9(2)(g)(i)

17

18

Proactive Release

- 19 We intend to proactively release this paper, with any redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

We recommend the Committee:

- 1 **note** the National | New Zealand First Coalition Agreement contains a commitment to “ensure proper funding for birthing units and maternity care, including providing for a three day stay for new mothers”.
- 2 **note** the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) (3 Day Postnatal Stay) Amendment Bill is currently a Member’s Bill, which seeks to establish a statutory entitlement allowing women who have given birth to elect to receive inpatient postnatal care for up to 72 hours, if desired.
- 3 **agree** the Government adopt the Bill as a Government Bill, to enable coordinated implementation and alignment with broader Government priorities and maternity care improvements.
- 4 9(2)(f)(iv), 9(2)(g)(i)

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Simeon Brown

Minster of Health

Hon Casey Costello

Associate Minister of Health

PROACTIVELY RELEASED