



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Safe-guarding the Use of Puberty Blockers in Young People with Gender-related Health Needs

Portfolios                      Health / Associate Health (Hon Matt Doocey)

On 18 November 2024, Cabinet:

- 1        **noted** that a Ministry of Health (the Ministry) evidence review found a lack of good quality evidence for the long-term effectiveness or safety of puberty blocking treatment for gender dysphoria, as set out in an Evidence Brief and Addendum;
- 2        **noted** that the Director-General of Health will shortly issue a Position Statement, attached to the submission under CAB-24-SUB-0455, on the use of puberty blockers in the treatment of young people with gender-related health needs, to accompany publication of the Evidence Brief and Addendum;
- 3        **noted** that the practical effect of the Position Statement will be that a far smaller number of prescribers will be able to prescribe puberty blockers in gender-affirming care, which will take effect immediately;
- 4        **noted** that Health New Zealand is updating clinical guidance, and that the Ministry will improve clinical practice supports and build a monitoring framework;
- 5        **noted** that the Ministry considers that the measures described in paragraphs 2 to 4 above support the prescribing of puberty blockers only for those gender-dysphoric young people for whom the benefits of these medicines outweigh the potential risks;
- 6        **noted** that the Ministry further advises that a precautionary approach would include considering whether further safeguarding measures should be put in place in the short-term or held in reserve for the future, should more risk information emerge;
- 7        **noted** that the Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health (Hon Matt Doocey) consider it prudent to take a cautious approach to further safeguard the prescribing of puberty blockers for people under 18 years, without delay;
- 8        **noted** that section 105 of the Medicines Act 1981 (the Act) provides for regulations related to prescribing and other medicine-related activities to be made by Order in Council, on the advice of the Minister of Health after consultation with organisations representative of those likely to be substantially affected;

- 9 s 9(2)(g)(i)
- 10 **agreed** that work should proceed towards considering regulation under section 105 of the Act to restrict prescribing of puberty blockers for people under 18 years;
- 11 **agreed** that consultation should consider:
- 11.1 whether there is a need to create such a regulation and its likely impacts;
  - 11.2 how the proposed regulation is framed to provide clarity of intent and effect;
  - 11.3 the effectiveness of the proposed regulation in minimising impacts and preserving access to these medicines for those groups being considered to need treatment with these medicines;
  - 11.4 which groups of young people with gender-related health needs, if any, should be able to access puberty blocking treatment;
  - 11.5 any implementation, administration, or enforcement issues or risks, and the prevention or management of these;
  - 11.6 any potential unintended impacts for people, health practitioners, health service providers, health regulators, or others, and the prevention or management of these;
- 12 **agreed** that, subject to consultation outcomes, any proposed regulation should preserve access to treatment with puberty blockers for:
- 12.1 people who need treatment with these medicines for a range of indications outside of their use in gender dysphoria;
  - 12.2 children and young people already receiving puberty blocker treatment as part of gender affirming care who consent to continue this treatment;
  - 12.3 use as part of a clinical trial (whether based in New Zealand or internationally) that is conducted for the purpose of obtaining information about the safety and efficacy of puberty blocking treatment;
- 13 **agreed** that the Ministry should consult on any proposed regulation with groups representative of:
- 13.1 medical practitioners and relevant specialist medical practitioners;
  - 13.2 health services providing care for young people with gender-related health needs;
  - 13.3 gender diverse young people, including rangatahi Māori and Pacific young people;
  - 13.4 families and whānau of gender diverse children and young people;
  - 13.5 health regulators; and
  - 13.6 the general public, by providing an opportunity for public submissions;
- 14 **agreed in principle**, subject to the report back in paragraph 15, that the development of any proposed regulation should proceed within short but feasible timeframes that are in keeping with legal and process requirements;

- 15 **noted** that a report on the results of consultation and impact analyses will be submitted to the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee early in 2025;
- 16 **noted** that the Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health (Hon Matt Doocey) expect that any regulations will be submitted to the Cabinet Legislation Committee for consideration in May 2025.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

PROACTIVELY RELEASED