

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Health

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Simeon Brown – October 2025

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Nadi, Fiji from Sunday 19 October to Tuesday 21 October 2025, to attend the opening day of the seventy-sixth World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Regional Committee Meeting (RCM).

Report

- 1 The primary purpose of my travel was to lead the New Zealand delegation to the seventy-sixth WHO Western Pacific RCM in Nadi Fiji, deliver two key statements on the first day of the meeting, and meet ministerial counterparts from countries in the region.
- 2 The RCM provides the 38 member states of the WHO Western Pacific Region a forum to make decisions and take action on issues related to the regional programme, budget, governance and management. This year, New Zealand's priorities for the RCM were:
 - 2.1 The WHO Western Pacific Region Programme budget 2026-2027
 - 2.2 Endorsing a regional action plan on climate change and health system safety and resilience
 - 2.3 Health security and non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
 - 2.4 Artificial intelligence and digital health
 - 2.5 Alcohol and tobacco control
- 3 Interventions by New Zealand advanced the Government's policy priorities and strongly aligned with the Government Policy Statement on Health (GPS). I delivered two interventions during the opening day.
- 4 In the country statement, I highlighted New Zealand's progress towards our five key health targets and our focus on putting patients first. I acknowledged the WHO reform and reprioritisation work underway and encouraged the organisation to take a 'back to basics' approach to deliver outcomes.

- 5 I also delivered a statement on the WHO's performance and programme budget for 2026/2027, where I acknowledged the challenging operating environment and highlighted New Zealand's support for strengthening country capacity, aligning resources with measurable impact, and focusing on clear targets to improve performance.
- 6 The RCM had a high level of ministerial attendance which enabled bilateral meetings with counterparts from Fiji, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Regional Director.
- 7 I met with Fijian Minister of Health, Dr Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu. Our conversation focused on mutual health interests, including NCDs and Fiji's response to HIV. Minister Lalabalavu thanked New Zealand for its support for the HIV response and broader health support through New Zealand's International Development Cooperation programme.
- 8 I met with Indonesian Minister of Health, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, and welcomed Indonesia to the region and their first RCM. Key points of interest included Indonesia's ambitious approach to tackling NCDs and their use of artificial intelligence and digital health technologies.
- 9 I met with the Philippines Secretary of Health, Dr Tedoro Herbosa, to discuss the Philippines' aspirations to represent the region on the WHO Executive Board in 2026. I recognised the valuable contribution of the Filipino healthcare workforce to New Zealand's health system.
- 10 I also met with the WHO WPR Regional Director, Dr Saia Piukala. I conveyed New Zealand's priorities for the RCM and encouraged him to continue his ongoing reform initiatives in response to the reduced budget for 2026-27.

Proactive release

- 11 I intend to proactively release this paper subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Simeon Brown

Minister of Health