

Aide-Mémoire

Sod turning event - Waikato Medical School

Date due to MO:	3 December 2025	Date of Event:	5 December 2025
Security level:	IN CONFIDENCE	Reference:	H2025075100
To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
Consulted:	Health New Zealand: ☐		
Proactive release:	This title is proposed by the Ministry of Health for proactive release: ☒		

Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Ruth Cook	Engagement Manager, Ministry of Health	s 9(2)(a)

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Date due: 3 December 2025

To: Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE

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About the Event

Purpose of Event You have accepted an invitation to a sod turning event for the New Zealand Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Waikato. A run-sheet is attached as **Appendix One** and Questions and Answers as **Appendix Two**.

Details of Event

Date: Friday, 5 December 2025
Time: 08:45am-11:00am
Venue: University of Waikato, Gate 8, Hillcrest Road, Hamilton 3216

Attendees The event will be attended by over 200 people including the Prime Minister, Minister Reti, Minister Potaka, Minister Upston, Ryan Hamilton MP for Hamilton East, Mayor of Hamilton Tim McIndoe and local councillors, Waikato Chancellor Susan Hassall.

Biographies of key people are attached as **Appendix Three**.

Organisation The University of Waikato is a research university with two campuses in Hamilton and Tauranga. It has a student community of more than 15,000 students from more than 70 countries.

Ministry representatives Audrey Sonerson, Director-General of Health
 Ruth Isaac, Deputy Director-General, Strategy and Policy

Other information You will deliver a speech which has been provided to your Office.

Media Media will be present. There will be a brief media stand-up.

Context

1. In March 2025, the Government committed to an additional 100 places for medical students across the Universities of Auckland and Otago – subject to securing enough clinical placements within hospital and primary care settings.
2. In July 2025, following the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2024, the Government approved the business case for a new medical school at the University of Waikato. The initiative is part of the Government's plan to strengthen the health workforce, a key priority in the Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Health 2024-27.
3. The University of Waikato's model is a new approach that focuses on primary care and rural health. It will diversify the locations where medical training is offered in New Zealand.
4. A thorough business case process has shown the proposed new medical school has the best long-term benefits for New Zealand, compared to other options. This process included a detailed cost-benefit analysis.
5. The Government will commit \$80.85 million in capital establishment costs to the new medical school. This is alongside \$151.86 million being contributed by the University of Waikato, including philanthropic support.
6. The establishment costs include curriculum development costs, new teaching facilities, laboratory refurbishment, community learning facilities and accommodation as well as off-campus infrastructure to support clinical placements.
7. The new medical school is in addition to the 100 extra doctor training places added over the course of this Government across the medical schools at the University of Auckland and University of Otago. The Government is funding an extra 25 places from 2026 across the two universities. This is in addition to the increases in 2024 (50 places) and in 2025 (25 places).
8. s 9(2)(f)(iv)
9. First student intake at Waikato of 120 students is planned for February 2028. This will add 120 new doctor training places annually, increasing the total placings from 639 (2026) to 759 (2028).
10. The University also intends to partner with the University of Canterbury as part of a broader initiative to strengthen training across multiple medical workforces.

Risks and mitigations

11. The new medical school is a high-profile initiative, with significant political and public interest. To mitigate the risk of inconsistent communication, the work programme includes a communications plan with regular information sharing.
12. Universities with pre-existing medical schools have an active interest in the new medical school development. To support the development of the school, the University of Auckland, University of Otago and University of Waikato have agreed principles for working together: positive collaboration, co-design, sustainability, transparency, best practice, and acting in the best interest of students and clinical educators.
13. s 9(2)(f)(iv) 
14. The University of Waikato maintains a risk register covering financial risks and mitigations, including potential cost overruns. The register has undergone Quantitative Risk Analysis (QRA) by an independent external party.

Practical arrangements for your visit

15. Parking will be available in Gate 8.
16. You will be briefed in the Pa at 8:50 am.
17. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori Dr Sarah-Jane Tiakiwai will MC the event and introduce you.
18. You will speak at a lectern with a fixed microphone on a stand. This will be livestreamed at the event to guests in building adjacent to site.


Annie Coughlan

Signed: 27/11/2025

Group manager of Communications & Engagement

Appendix One: Run-sheet

Time	Details	Minister's Office notes
8:45am	VIP Arrival: Prime Minister, Minister Brown, Minister Reti, Kīngitanga, Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor convene in The Pā.	Assigned parking at Gate 8, additional parking available at Gate 6B.
8:50am	Briefing of VIPs in The Pā	
8:55am	VIPs escorted from The Pā to event site.	
9:00am	Prime Minister, Ministers & Kīngitanga welcomed with karanga to the ceremony area and invited to take their seats in reserved spaces. Order of speakers: • University Kaumatua (mihi whakatau) • Response from Prime Ministers delegation (Hon. Tama Potaka) • Waiata • MC Welcome • Representative for Kuini Ngā Wai Hono i te Pō • Waiata • Vice-Chancellor Professor Neil Quigley • Rt Hon. Christopher Luxon PM • Minister Brown • Minister Reti • Waiata	Once the waiata is complete, MC will invite VIP's and official party toward the area inside hoardings where ground-breaking and embedding the mauri will take place.
9:45am	Turning of the sod VC, Chancellor, PM, Minister & Kuini's representative to turn the first piece of sod (ceremonial) Photographs to take place	
10:00am	Embedding of Mauri: TBC with Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori This will be conducted by students. Karakia and Karanga will take place while the mauri is being lowered into the ground Opportunity for media standup	Select group of staff will bury mauri and replace the turf – followed by a closing Karakia
10:15am	Refreshments and Health Technology Demonstrations	Morning tea served for all guests in The Pā

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Appendix Three: Biographies of key attendees

	Susan Hassall, Waikato Chancellor A distinguished career in education, including serving as Headmaster of Hamilton Boys' High School. Active in the community as a Justice of the Peace, celebrant, and Chair of Hospice Waikato, Susan joined the University Council in 2016, served seven years as Pro Chancellor, and was appointed Chancellor in July 2025.
	Professor Neil Quigley, Vice-Chancellor Appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Waikato in early 2015. Previously holding positions at Victoria University and University of Western Ontario, Canada, as Professor of Economics. Professor Quigley was the previous Chair of the Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand. He is also a former Deputy Chair and Acting Chair of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.
	Cheryl de la Rey, University of Canterbury Vice-Chancellor An internationally recognised academic leader, she previously served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria and CEO of South Africa's Council on Higher Education. At UC, she has led major initiatives in research excellence, sustainability, and student growth, steering the university through significant challenges such as the Christchurch mosque attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic.
	Tim Macindoe, Mayor of Hamilton Elected in 2025 after serving as a city councillor for the East Ward. A former Member of Parliament for Hamilton West (2008–2020), he held senior roles including Minister of Customs and Chief Government Whip. Tim's career spans education, arts administration, and public service; he taught for 17 years and was Deputy Principal at St Peter's School.