

Office of Hon Simeon Brown

Minister of Health
Minister for State Owned Enterprises
Minister for Auckland



14 April 2026

Ms Rae Lamb
Chair
Health Quality and Safety Commission
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Rae

I am writing to set out my expectations and priorities for 2026/27. 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 want the health system focused on putting patients first in every decision.

My key areas of focus continue to be:

- getting Health New Zealand (Health NZ) back to basics;
- delivering all health targets, including driving shorter stays in emergency departments and getting on top of the elective surgery backlog;
- enabling faster access to primary care;
- delivering a long-term health infrastructure programme; and
- streamlining accountability mechanisms, statutory and regulatory settings to drive performance.

A number of the above areas of focus align strongly with the work the Health Quality and Safety Commission (HQSC) does to ensure that New Zealanders receive better, safer health care.

My overarching expectation is that the HQSC supports the health system to be relentless in its pursuit of the delivery of more and better health services for New Zealanders. In doing so, I expect the HQSC to put patient need at the heart of every decision it makes and to prioritise quality and safe care based on clinical need, not race.

Our system must deliver the best mix of outputs and services possible within current budgets, with a focus on optimising productivity and efficiency. Each entity must play its part for the system to perform as a whole. Where possible and useful, individual entities need to partner with others to find synergies and efficiencies which will help achieve this aim. I expect the HQSC clearly measures and demonstrates its impact/value add to the system, focusing on its core responsibilities, and prioritising funding to areas that align with government and system priorities.

Particularly, I expect that the HQSC will focus on:

- **Strengthened monitoring:** HQSC has an important independent role as a monitoring agency with a mandate to look across the sector. I would like to see you strengthen your relationships with other agencies that capture patient safety data, including ACC and the Health and Disability Commissioner, with a view to broadening your monitoring role. I

understand the HQSC, the ACC, the HDC and Health NZ have now signed a refreshed data memorandum of understanding, agreeing how to ensure best use of the data captured, with a view to enabling frontline agencies to deliver on this Government's health targets.

- **Focus on core responsibilities:** I expect HQSC is prioritising its resources on assessing and evaluating risks, opportunities and practice where there is the greatest value in shifting performance, making practical recommendations for change. This should be done in conjunction with ACC, who also have a role to play in health services quality improvement. I also expect HQSC to report to me regularly its assessment of the quality and safety of the health system and encourage HQSC to focus on health service delivery and avoid advocacy roles.
- **Strengthening clinical decision-making:** I expect HQSC to strengthen the role of the National Quality Forum (NQF) to drive accountability for quality and safety and ensuring alignment with Health NZ's clinical senate and leadership model. This will support improvements to clinical governance across the health entities.
I expect the HQSC to continue to strengthen relationships with other agencies. Building a high-trust relationship with Health NZ that enables achievement of mutual goals and meaningful collaboration is important. This includes building constructive relationships between agency members of the NQF that will enable more effective collaboration and ensure that the forum effectively addresses issues raised and agency requests for collaboration.
I have outlined to Health NZ that I expect clinical governance is not only embedded but actively driving improvements in safety, accountability, and outcomes across all levels of the organisation. I expect the HQSC to support the system and individual organisations to apply the clinical governance framework.
- **Fiscal responsibility:** Maintaining delivery 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
- **Driving system improvement:** The HQSC has a unique and important role in the health system. I expect you to prioritise investment in constructive, trusting relationships with consumers and key agencies such as Health NZ so their perspectives can be combined with high quality objective data to deliver meaningful insights that drive system improvement and support individual agencies to improve.
- **System safety strategy:** I look forward to being provided with a system safety strategy (which is a deliverable of the Government Policy Statement on Health). Once the strategy has been finalised and an action plan developed, I expect the HQSC will have a role in ensuring the strategy is being implemented across the system.
- **Adverse events:** I expect the HQSC to continue to maintain a national oversight and identify system issues in relation to Severity assessment codes (SAC) reporting and work with Health NZ to agree how adverse events are publicly reported.
- **Code of expectations for health entities' engagement with consumers and whānau (the code):** I note that changes outlined in the Healthy Futures (Pae Ora) Amendment Bill may require the HQSC to review the Code to ensure alignment with legislation. I expect you to undertake the processes necessary in order that the Code aligns with legislation.
- **Primary and community care:** I expect your work programme to have a focus on primary and community care, such as how patients flow through the system.
- **Reflecting my expectations in your accountability documents:** My overarching expectation remains that all health entities are relentless in the pursuit of the delivery of better health outcomes for New Zealanders. My expectations should form the basis for the development of your accountability documents for the coming financial year. As you prioritise your work programme, please advise me early to discuss any proposed trade-offs that would impact on the full delivery of any of my expectations. Please ensure

regular progress updates are provided through your performance reports. I expect you to ensure timely responses continue to be provided to information requests made by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry), as your monitoring agency. I expect you to advise me and the Ministry early if you have any concerns about progress.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work to date, and I look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to improve health outcomes for all New Zealanders. Please provide a draft of your Statement of Intent for 2026-2030 and Statement of Performance Expectations for 2026/27 to your contact at the Ministry by 30 April 2026.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simeon Brown'.

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Health

cc Audrey Sonerson, Director-General, Ministry of Health,
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Professor Sunny Collings, Chief Executive, HQSC,
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