



27 November 2012

An open letter from health practitioner associations:

In 2009 Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) was established within the Ministry of Health. Its primary responsibility is for planning and development of the health workforce, ensuring that staffing issues are aligned with planning on delivery of services and that the healthcare workforce is fit for purpose. HWNZ ostensibly reports through the National Health Board however its chair, Professor Des Gorman, has a direct line to the Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Ryall.

The signatories to this letter share significant concern about the performance of HWNZ and have identified areas in which improvements are required to restore health workforce confidence in HWNZ's ability to meet its core functions.

Key concerns include

- Poor focus to date on the core business of workforce projections and planning
- Very poor engagement with the health practitioner representative organisations to inform developments
- Lack of transparency in processes
- Innovations that are poorly planned and lack rigorous evaluation
- Poor knowledge of New Zealand workforce research and data
- A fragmented, rather than sector wide, view of the workforce driving increasing fragmentation
- Introducing international models as demonstration sites in the absence of robust cost benefit analysis including the education sector and regulatory costs and sustainability in a population of 4.5 million with geographical challenges, and
- That despite a number of forums, recommendations and innovative ideas from Māori, very little has changed in terms of addressing Māori health workforce development.

The changes required to build health workforce confidence in HWNZ and its mandated programme are

- Open and transparent processes
- Positive engagement with the sector including representative organisations
- Sound problem identification and exploration of all options before developing and testing new models
- Robust evaluation designs
- Rigorous cost/benefit analysis of the introduction of new models and new health practitioners
- Engagement with New Zealand health workforce researchers
- Consultation with the sector on changes to models of delivery

Health workforce planning is critically important for the future of New Zealand's health service. The signatories have much to offer and a strong desire to contribute positively to the work of HWNZ. At present they are unable to do so. Strengthening HWNZ's engagement with the sector and developing a systematic approach to workforce planning and innovation will ensure the future health workforce is developed to meet the health need of New Zealanders.



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