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Kaipara District Council

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Kaipara District Council Long-Term Plan 2024–2027

Thank you for the opportunity for the National Public Health Service – Northern Region, Health New Zealand –Te Whatu Ora to provide a submission on Kaipara District Council’s Long-Term Plan 2024–2027.

The National Public Health Service – Northern Region welcomes an opportunity to meet with you to discuss our submission.

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Executive summary

This submission is made on behalf of the National Public Health Service (NPHS) – Northern Region. NPHS is a directorate within Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ), responsible for protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of populations in Aotearoa/New Zealand. NPHS and Kaipara District Council (KDC) have common goals in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland to protect and improve community health and wellbeing and reduce inequities within the population. NPHS acknowledges the complexities faced by KDC in addressing major financial challenges in a region facing significant social, economic, and environmental pressures.

This submission mainly looks at the longer-term strategy and direction within KDC's Long-Term Plan 2024-2027 (LTP) consultation document and other strategy documents. There is considerable scope for collaboration between KDC, NPHS and other agencies for maximum population health and wellbeing benefit in the Kaipara District. NPHS has aligned its response with the KDC's Community Outcomes to highlight the ownership of population health throughout society and encourage prioritisation of these areas in its planning.

Healthy environment

- (1) *Climate change*: NPHS supports collaborative whole-of-government approaches to climate change, such as Te Tai Tokerau Climate Action programme across local authorities and other agencies and programmes such as MPI projects and mental wellbeing fund.
- (2) *Water resilience*: NPHS recommends investment in climate resilience activities with a heavy emphasis on water supply resilience.

Vibrant communities

- (3) *KDC's role as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner*: NPHS recommends that the KDC carries out its roles and functions in a way that recognises He Whakaputanga and actively adheres to and implements Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- (4) *Equity-centred planning*: NPHS recommends an equity-focused accountability framework be adopted to monitor and measure progress. This framework should include best-practice use of data. NPHS also recommends that KDC develops and invests in their internal systems for managing and promoting good quality engagement with diverse communities, and that language employed in LTP documents represent community- and environment-oriented values, that extend beyond economic issues.
- (5) *Access to fluoridated water*: NPHS notes that Dargaville and Maungaturoto have been identified as potential water supplies to be fluoridated by the Ministry of Health – Manatu Hauora. NPHS supports community water fluoridation and recommend that the costing is taken into consideration in the current LTP.

Affordable living

(6) *Access to healthy housing:* NPHS recognises that equitable access to healthy housing is influenced by systemic social, political and economic drivers that extend beyond the exclusive control of local government and notes that designing and implementing solutions requires collaboration across all sectors. NPHS encourages KDC to work closely with local community and government organisations, and iwi and hapū, to create sustainable housing solutions, especially for Māori. To support climate change objectives, NPHS also recommends that KDC prioritises reducing emissions from existing and new houses while maximising health and equity co-benefits.

Prosperous economy

(7) *Equitable investment:* NPHS acknowledges the complex decisions for KDC regarding investment in several areas that are core to upholding public health. These include deferments of local road improvements, traffic calming interventions, the next phase of the Mangawhai shared path, and wastewater upgrades. NPHS recommends that the decided mix of investments be distributed with equity as the leading criteria, such as by focussing investment in areas experiencing higher socioeconomic disadvantage.

1. Overview

Providing the social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that promote wellbeing within present and future communities is one of the main purposes of local government.¹ To flourish, the people of Te Tai Tokerau/Northland require a safe and healthy environment, good health, productive lives and the feeling of inclusion and contribution to society. Good health depends upon various societal factors, including cohesive communities, access to socioeconomic resources, quality education, and a health-promoting physical environment. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental human right.² Both the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirm the right to equitable access to the determinants of health and wellbeing, acknowledging the needs and perspectives of those more likely to experience barriers to access, including indigenous peoples and children.^{3,4}

The World Health Organization defines public health as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society”. The National Public Health Service (NPHS) is tasked with pursuing this objective within Aotearoa/New Zealand, with a particular emphasis on reducing inequities, influencing social determinants and supporting people to be healthy where they live, learn, work and play. This submission is from the Northern Region of the NPHS, which fulfils these responsibilities at the local and regional level within Te Tai Tokerau/Northland and Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland.

Kaipara faces several health challenges which relate to its roles and responsibilities, such as: impacts of climate change; potentially avoidable hospitalisations for issues such as oral health and respiratory infections; high rates of people living in substandard housing and experiencing homelessness; and a rising prevalence of long-term health conditions. The Long-Term Plan 2024 – 2027 (LTP) needs to incorporate the reality of growing demand for quality infrastructure and services because of these challenges, prioritising actions that advance equity and safeguard the needs of future generations. NPHS acknowledges the complexities confronted by Kaipara District Council (KDC) in addressing

¹ NZ Government. (2002). *Local Government Act 2002, section 10 (1)*. Wellington: NZ Govt. Retrieved from <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/DLM170873.html>

² World Health Organisation (WHO). (2024). WHO remains firmly committed to the principles set out in the preamble to the Constitution. Geneva: WHO. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution>

³ United Nations General Assembly. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Resolution A/RES/61/295). Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

⁴ United Nations General Assembly. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child (Resolution A/RES/44/25). Retrieved from: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

major financial challenges in a district facing significant social, economic, and environmental pressures.

Councils have responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Local Government Act 2002 that overlap with the objectives of NPHS. With these common goals, there are opportunities for NPHS, KDC, and other partners to work together to address challenges in a way that optimises benefits for human health and wellbeing in the Kaipara District. Drawing on this context, the enclosed response details some key areas through which KDC (with support from NPHS) can take meaningful steps towards achieving its Community Outcomes within the current LTP and future strategic documents. These include;

- **Healthy environment: climate change and water resilience**
- **Vibrant communities: KDC’s responsibilities as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner; equity-centred planning; and access to fluoridated water**
- **Affordable living: access to healthy housing**
- **Prosperous economy: equitable investment**

2. Key priorities

2.1 Healthy environment

Climate change

All aspects of the environment affect public health. The impacts of extreme weather events and other more gradual climate-related changes on human health are increasingly recognised and affecting the Kaipara District. Adaptation to increase the capacity of the region to face the impacts of climate change and mitigation to slow the progression of these changes are needed at the local as well as national government level. These impacts in Aotearoa/New Zealand were stated in a recent scientific review:

“Climate change mitigation is an urgent global priority. The health damaging effects in Aotearoa New Zealand were demonstrated by floods and storms that affected northern parts of the country in early 2023. Climate change affects human health directly, via extreme meteorological events (deaths and injuries from storms, floods, heatwaves and fires); indirectly, due to changes to the environment and ecosystems (increases in temperature and/or changes in rainfall patterns affecting food production, food availability, diets and nutrition; altered transmission of communicable diseases) and due to social and economic

changes. All of the above impacts will have important effects on livelihoods, household costs and the distribution of income. In turn, these changes have important health impacts.”⁵

Climate change is a risk multiplier that will exacerbate existing health inequities, with rural communities being recognised in Aotearoa as a particularly vulnerable population.⁶ Communities in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland have already experienced the effects of climate change; most recently the Auckland Anniversary Storm (2023), Cyclone Gabrielle⁷, and droughts in 2020 and 2024. These impacted on infrastructure, food and water security; compromised access to healthcare, housing, and income; psychosocial wellbeing; and community cohesion.

Climate change also has particular impacts and significance for Māori, who comprise around 32% of the Te Tai Tokerau/Northland population. A significant proportion of Māori in the region are living in their turangawaewae and have a generational investment and responsibility to the whenua (land). Principles such as Mauri Ora (healthy individuals), Whānau Ora (healthy families) and Wai Ora (healthy environments) are interwoven threads of how Māori interact with each other, the wider communities and fundamentally how they coexist with the environment.

Recommendations

- NPHS acknowledges the challenges faced by KDC in recovering from recent extreme weather events in the district. To protect communities from the impacts of future climate change-related extreme weather events, and reduce the resource required for future recovery efforts, NPHS recommends that KDC take a preventative approach by retaining a dedicated climate resilience and adaptation programme. Retaining this programme will enable KDC to meet their obligations under the Local Government Act 2002, namely in relation to:
 - (1) promoting the wellbeing of current and future communities, and;
 - (2) undertaking good risk management and sufficient infrastructure services planning.
- In addition to dedicated local climate resilience programmes, NPHS supports collaborative whole-of-government approaches to climate change, such as Te Tai Tokerau Climate Action

⁵ Pourzand, F., Bolton, A., Salter, C., et.al. (2023). Health and climate change: adaptation policy in Aotearoa New Zealand. *The Lancet: Regional Health Western Pacific*, 40(100954). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2023.100954>

⁶ Nixon, G., Davie, G., Whitehead, J., et.al. (2023). Comparison of urban and rural mortality rates across the lifespan in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A population-level study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 77(9):571-577. DOI: 10.1136/jech-2023-220337.

⁷ Harrington L, Dean S, Awatere S, Rosier S, Queen L, Gibson P, et al. The role of climate change in extreme rainfall associated with Cyclone Gabrielle over Aotearoa New Zealand's East Coast. 2023.

programme, across local authorities and other agencies and programmes such as MPI projects and the mental wellbeing fund.^{3,4}

Water resilience

The management of water, be it flood protection, quality or adequacy of supply (particularly drinking water), and waste water treatment, is critical in all aspects of population health in Kaipara. The effects of the 2020 drought transcended individual district council limits, requiring water to be transported from outside of district council and regional boundaries. Future preparedness should include responding to drought in Kaipara, but also recognising that other districts and regions may require water support, should the geographic focus of a drought differ. The same interdependence may occur if critical infrastructure is damaged during a flooding event, as was demonstrated by Cyclone Gabrielle.

Section 127 of the Local Government Act 2002, states that “councils have a duty to ensure that the community have access to drinking water if existing suppliers are facing significant issues that pose a serious risk to public health.” Inadequate supply or compromised water quality poses a serious public health risk, and should be taken into account in the assessments undertaken under Section 125 of the same Act.

Recommendations

- NPHS recommends ongoing investment in climate resilience activities with a heavy emphasis on water supply resilience. NPHS notes that KDC are investigating options for securing Dargaville’s drinking water supply, and supports ongoing efforts to achieve this objective.
- NPHS is currently working with KDC and Northland Regional Council around issues with the Mangawhai wastewater treatment plant. NPHS notes that prioritising upgrades to this plant may be necessary in order to resolve the current issues, and ensure the resilience and cost-effectiveness of the plant in the longer-term.
- NPHS recommends that the KDC works in collaboration with Northland Regional Council with regards to Section 125, given the impact of catchments on source water adequacy and quality.

2.2 Vibrant communities

KDC's responsibilities as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner

The responsibilities and accountabilities of the NPHS to Māori through Te Tiriti o Waitangi are expressed through the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022. NPHS work to Te Tiriti principles, as articulated by the courts and the Waitangi Tribunal. These include:

- **Tino rangatiratanga:** Providing for Māori self-determination and mana motuhake.
- **Equity:** Being committed to achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori.
- **Active protection:** Acting to the fullest extent practicable to achieve equitable health outcomes for Māori. This includes ensuring that the Crown, its agents and its Treaty partner under Te Tiriti are well informed on the extent, and nature, of both Māori health outcomes and efforts to achieve Māori health equity.
- **Options:** Providing for and properly resourcing kaupapa Māori health and disability services.
- **Partnership:** Working in partnership with Māori in governance, design, delivery and monitoring of health and disability services – Māori must be co-designers, with the Crown, of the primary health system for Māori.

In recognition of He Whakaputanga, NPHS strives to engage with iwi in a genuine and authentic manner. This requires careful consideration of its role as a Crown agency, so that iwi can exercise their tino rangatiratanga (their self-determination, independence and autonomy) in relation to the health and wellbeing aspirations of their people.

Similarly, upholding the rights of Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi within local governance creates conditions for shared prosperity and wellbeing. This is emphasised in He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku, the Future of Local Government Report (2023):

“The future system of local governance needs to bring together the strengths of local government, hapū and iwi to help drive positive change for communities at place.”⁸

NPHS is concerned that the failure to acknowledge or uphold Māori rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the KDC LTP could lead to adverse health impacts on Māori. Given the omission of any reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the LTP consultation document, NPHS emphasises that embedding Māori rights within KDC policies and plans is crucial for community cohesion, resilience, and response in emergencies for all Kaipara residents. Local organisations such as Whakamana

⁸ Future for Local Government Review Panel. (2023). *Review into the Future for Local Government: He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku*, Wellington: New Zealand. Retrieved from [https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/\\$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf)

Tangata Charitable Trust in Dargaville are already stretched in dealing with the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and Cyclone Gabrielle on the most vulnerable whānau in Kaipara, especially Māori whānau. As such, NPHS urges KDC to ensure that the LTP and the development of future plans and policies are aligned to the plans, aspirations, feedback, and advice of tāngata whenua partners.

Recommendations

NPHS recommends that KDC carry out its role and function in a way that recognises He Whakaputanga and actively adheres to and implements Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku Future of Local Government Review⁹ (2023) provided a deep look into a Tiriti-based partnership between Māori and Local Government. NPHS supports the direction of this document and encourages KDC to implement the suggested actions:

- shared decision-making between hapū/iwi and councils in relation to areas of shared priority that relate to Māori rights and interests;
- growing hapū/iwi capacity and opportunity to identify areas of greatest interest and aspiration and enact the change;
- creating the right conditions and spaces for councils and iwi and hapū to collaborate, tell stories of the places they are connected to and passionate about, and build a shared understanding of local whakapapa;
- Māori citizens expressing their culturally specific preferences for services, representation, and participation; and
- creating a greater level of transparency and accountability for both partners.

Equity-centred planning

Promoting equity is an important aspect of achieving the key purpose of local government to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities. Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora¹⁰ has a similar objective, and defines health equity as:

“In Aotearoa New Zealand people have differences in health that are not only avoidable, but unfair and unjust. Equity recognises different people with different levels of advantage require different approaches and resources to get equitable health outcomes.”

⁹ Future for Local Government Review Panel. (2023). *Review into the Future for Local Government: He piki tūranga, he piki kōtuku*, Wellington: New Zealand. Retrieved from [https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/\\$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Future-for-Local-Government/$file/Te-Arotake_Final-report.pdf)

¹⁰ Health NZ. (2024). *Achieving equity*. Wellington: Health NZ. Retrieved from <https://www.tewhātuora.govt.nz/whats-happening/about-us/who-we-are/achieving-equity/>

NPHS also applies an equity lens to planning, prioritising, funding and implementation frameworks, recognising “that different people with different levels of advantage require different approaches and resources to get equitable health outcomes”. This helps NPHS meet community needs, informed by circumstances and led through the perspectives and experiences of communities themselves.

The causes of inequity can be complex, including:

- the impact of the wider determinants of health (including socioeconomic deprivation, housing and the physical environment and exposure to harmful commodities including alcohol, tobacco and ultra-processed foods);
- racism and discrimination in how services are designed, commissioned and delivered, including inaccessibility of services; and
- how funding has been historically allocated.”¹¹

The factors affecting community wellbeing are broadly similar to those affecting health equity, so should be of joint interest to local government and NPHS. NPHS supports equity issues being a key consideration in achieving these goals through the LTP.

Key health equity issues in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland include:

- Māori health inequity, including an 8-year gap in life expectancy when compared to non-Māori¹²;
- high levels of socioeconomic deprivation, including for children;
- inequity for rural people, including longer wait times to access primary care¹³ and being less likely to have timely access to emergency medical services, which increases mortality and disability.¹⁴ Access barriers, such as limited transport, also decrease the uptake of preventative and public health initiatives. Rates of children fully immunised by the age of 2, for example, are 5% lower for rural children;¹⁵
- poor oral health outcomes for children, such as decayed, missing and filled teeth, in part related to drinking water supply fluoridation.¹⁶

¹¹ Ministry of Health. (2022). *Interim Government Policy Statement on Health 2022-2024*. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/hp8132-igps-v28.pdf>

¹² Health NZ (Te Tai Tokerau). (2024). Our health profile. Wellington: HNZ. Retrieved from <https://www.northlanddhd.org.nz/about-us/about-us/our-health-profile/>

¹³ Minister of Health. (2023). Rural Health Strategy. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/rural-health-strategy-oct23-v2.pdf>

¹⁴ Lilley, R., De Graaf, B., Kool, B., Davie, G., Reid, P., Dicker, B., et al. (2019). Geographical and population disparities in timely access to prehospital and advanced level emergency care in New Zealand: A cross-sectional study. *BMJ*, 9(7): e026026. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31350239/>

¹⁵ The Minister of Health. (2023). *Rural Health Strategy*.

¹⁶ Ministry of Health. (2023). *Oral health data and stats*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/oral-health-data-and-stats>

Accountability

Working towards and achieving health equity requires ways of monitoring and measuring success. The collection, analysis and reporting of data by ethnicity, age, gender, education, income, disability, and other factors is a crucial foundation for this.¹⁷ Special consideration must be given to ethnicity data collection and quality, especially for Māori data.¹⁸

Qualitative data including community and whānau perspectives are also essential to understand the how and why of inequities. Data must also be linked with information on other determinants such as education to better understand cause-and-effect relationships, i.e., how these other determinants contribute to health inequities. Part of inequity monitoring includes addressing gaps created by gender and other biases in how data has been previously collected, analysed and reported. Data collected for this purpose must be handled in concordance with data sovereignty and Māori Data Sovereignty principles¹⁹.

Engagement and inclusivity

NPBS believes collectively local, regional and national government and health services could work more collaboratively to support the health and wellbeing of Kaipara communities. In addition to local government's responsibility to work in partnership with mana whenua, there is also a duty to ensure that the diverse voices of the community—including Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, rangatahi/youth, refugees, new migrants, and the LGBTQIA+ community—are heard and reflected in decision-making and the shaping of the legacy future generations inherit.

In addition to proactive outreach to engage more diversely with the community, accessibility of the consultation would be enhanced by a more inclusive framing and tone within the LTP consultation document. In particular, the document would be strengthened by the use of language that is people-centred, empowering, and reflects the values of the communities that KDC serves. Specifically, greater integration of the full spectrum of Community Outcomes (including 'Healthy Environments' and 'Thriving Communities') within the language employed in the LTP consultation document would provide clarity on KDC's aspirations for Kaipara, beyond economic goals.

¹⁷ WHO. (2024). Health equity. Geneva: WHO. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-equity#tab=tab_2

¹⁸ McLeod, M., & Harris, R. (2023). Action plan for achieving high quality ethnicity data in the health and disability sector. Wellington: Te Aka Whai Ora. Retrieved from <https://www.teakawhaiora.nz/assets/Uploads/Ethnicity-Data-Action-Plan.pdf>

¹⁹ Te Mana Raraunga/Māori Data Sovereignty Network. (2023). *Our Māori data sovereignty principles*. Retrieved from <https://www.temanararaunga.maori.nz/nga-rauemi#OurM%C4%81oriDataSovereigntyPrinciples>

Recommendations

NPBS recommends:

- an equity-focused accountability framework be adopted to monitor and measure success;
- that KDC develop and invest in their internal systems for managing and promoting good quality engagement with diverse communities to ensure that the voices of Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, rangatahi/youth, refugees, new migrants, the LGBTQIA+ community, and other diverse communities are heard and reflected in its decision-making;
- that language employed in Council documents represent community- and environment-oriented values, that extend beyond economic considerations.

Access to fluoridated drinking water

Oral health is an important part of general health and wellbeing. Oral health status impacts on a person's ability to eat, be social and be employed²⁰, while poor oral health is also associated with avoidable hospitalisations and lower measures of overall health.²¹

Community water fluoridation is advocated by The Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora as a safe, effective, and affordable measure to combat tooth decay, particularly benefiting underserved groups like tāmariki Māori and Pacific children. Studies over the past six decades, including those conducted in Aotearoa/New Zealand, consistently demonstrate its efficacy in reducing tooth decay rates. Adjusting fluoride levels in drinking water within the range recommended by the World Health Organization and Manatū Hauora, between 0.7 and 1.0 mg/L, is highlighted as the most efficient strategy for preventing dental decay.

The oral health status of the population of Te Tai Tokerau/Northland is marked by significant challenges, with high rates of preventable tooth decay.²² Notably, Te Tai Tokerau/Northland lacks community water fluoridation, exacerbating the issue and leaving residents without a proven public health preventive measure. Tamariki Māori, Pacific children, and those in underserved communities face particular barriers to accessing adequate dental care. Introducing community water fluoridation

²⁰ Tiwari T, Jamieson L, Broughton J, Lawrence HP, Batliner TS, Arantes R, et al. Reducing Indigenous Oral Health Inequalities: A Review from 5 Nations. *Journal of dental research*. 2018 Jul;97(8):869-77. PubMed PMID: 29554440. Epub 2018/03/20. eng.

²¹ Jatrana S, Crampton P, Filoche S. The case for integrating oral health into primary health care. *N Z Med J*. 2009 Aug 21;122(1301):43-52. PMID: 19829391.

²² [Annual Update of Key Results 2022/23: New Zealand Health Survey | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

would benefit those most in need and thus reduce ethnic oral health inequities across Te Tai Tokerau.

Recommendations

- NPHS supports Dargaville and Maungaturoto being identified as potential water supplies to be fluoridated.
- NPHS recommends that the costing is taken into consideration in the LTP.

2.3 Affordable living

Access to healthy housing

NPHS appreciates the considerable challenge of prioritising a limited range of fiscal and human resources on broad issues which affect the prosperity and wellbeing of the local community, as well as identifying revenue streams to do so sustainably. In that context, NPHS advocates for a core LTP focus to be on activities that will contribute to increasing the proportion of the community living with access to safe and affordable housing, as a prerequisite for all other areas of public policy to build on, such as healthcare, education, community safety and an inclusive economy.

NPHS recognises that equitable access to healthy housing is influenced by systemic social and political and economic drivers that extend beyond the exclusive control of local government. As such, NPHS notes that designing and implementing solutions requires collaboration between central and local government agencies (including NPHS), iwi and hapū, and non-governmental organisations.

Without these collective efforts, there remains a risk that a large group in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland will remain out of reach of more downstream opportunities that other policy development areas may provide, potentially widening social and health inequities. The key components of these challenges are outlined below.

Substandard housing

A 2021 analysis of households in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland highlighted a high proportion of people living in substandard housing, particularly in relation to damp and mould, and many households lacking access to basic amenities.²³ It was reported in 2020 that one in three Māori live in cold, damp and/or mouldy homes, in comparison with one in five Pākehā. In Te Tai Tokerau/Northland,

²³ George, L., Gowda, S., & Buchwald, K. (2021, March). *Kāinga Kore - Homelessness in Te Tai Tokerau: An overview* (p. 35-36). Whangārei, NZ: Ngā Tai Ora, Public Health Northland, NDHB

42.9% of Māori live in damp housing.²⁴ Such conditions, along with overcrowding and other factors of substandard housing, can have significant impacts on health, especially in relation to respiratory infections, chronic lung diseases, rheumatic fever and skin infections.²⁵ There is strong evidence, nationally and internationally, of improved health outcomes resulting from warmer and drier homes.²⁶ Improving housing is also an equity issue, with Māori and Pacific families being over-represented in low-income households and in areas of poorer quality and crowded housing. Energy use in housing (building and heating) also impacts carbon emissions.

Homelessness

It is understood that “A home is essential to wellbeing.... [as] a crucial platform for recovery, employment, education and wider community engagement and participation”.²⁷ In 2019, more than 41,000 people were estimated to be homeless in Aotearoa NZ.²⁸ Furthermore:

- “homelessness is no longer dominated by the stereotypical rough sleeper with mental health issues and is now more often a working family with young children”²⁹;
- Māori and Pacific people groups, along with new migrants and those with disabilities, have disproportionate rates of homelessness;³⁰
- many have experienced a multitude of disadvantages, including poverty, poor physical and/or mental health, unemployment or low-income rates, and disconnection from cultural institutions³¹;
- the concept of the ‘hidden homeless’ defines homelessness as beyond just those who are sleeping rough, to include those who are ‘couch surfing’, living in overcrowded homes and so on.³²

²⁴ McLachlan, L-M. (2020, 2 July). Māori children will end up in hospital due to cold, mouldy homes, say advocates. NZ Herald. Retrieved from <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/maori-children-will-end-up-in-hospital-due-to-cold-mouldy-homes-say-advocates/M3V7R6HNHN6UO4DMFQ2MHGXWLU/>

²⁵ George, et.al., 2021, p. 35.

²⁶ Ministry of Health/Manatū Hauora. (2021). Healthy Homes Initiative. Wellington, NZ: MOH. Retrieved from <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/healthy-homesinitiative>

²⁷ Office of the Minister of Housing; Office of the Minister for Social Development; Office of the Associate Minister of Housing; & Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee. (2019, 14 August). *Preventing and reducing homelessness in New Zealand* (p. 1). Wellington, NZ: NZ Government. Retrieved from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/News-and-Resources/ProactiveReleases/f41acf93b7/Cabinet-Paper-Preventing-and-Reducing-Homelessness-in-New-Zealand.pdf>

²⁸ Labour Party, Green Party & Māori Party. (2016, 10 October). *Final Report of the Cross-Party Inquiry on Homelessness*. Wellington, NZ: Authors. Retrieved from <https://www.communityhousing.org.nz/resources/article/cross-party-inquiry-into-homelessnessreleases-report>

²⁹ Labour Party, et.al., 2016. Amore, K. (2016). *Severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand: 2001-2013*. Wellington, NZ: He Kainga Oranga/Housing & Health Research Programme, Department of Public Health, University of Otago.

³⁰ Labour Party, et.al., 2016

³¹ Richards, S. (2008). *Homelessness in Aotearoa: Issues and recommendations*. Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness.

³² Rigby, B. (2017). Responding to homelessness in New Zealand: Homelessness and Housing First for Māori: Meaning and optimisation. *Parity*, 30(8), 41-43. Retrieved from <https://www.housingfirst.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Parity-Vol30-08.pdf>

It has been recognised that Te Tai Tokerau/Northland has one of the most severe experiences of homelessness, with a disproportionate impact on Māori.³³ In Te Tai Tokerau/Northland, across all age groups, Māori make up a significantly higher proportion of those receiving Emergency Housing Grants:

- in the 15-29-year age group, 87.1% identified as Māori;
- amongst 30-44 year olds, 83.3% identified as Māori;
- of the 45-59 age group, 79% identified as Māori;
- 52.5% amongst the 60+ age group identified as Māori; this is more than half the recipients in that age range³⁴

Diversifying housing options

The Te Pouahi o Te Tai Tokerau Māori Housing Trust was established in 2023 to deliver 80 new homes and provide improvement infrastructure for 110 houses across Te Tai Tokerau/Northland.³⁵ The \$55m package released by then Associate Minister of Housing (Māori Housing) Peeni Henare will contribute significantly to the situation regarding sub-standard housing and homelessness for Māori in Te Tai Tokerau/Northland.³⁶ However, there will remain significant issues regarding Māori housing, particularly for areas of high Māori population including isolated rural areas. Alternative solutions to housing are prevalent now, with ‘tiny homes’ and container homes a viable option for low-income families who cannot afford standard housing, or to provide extra housing for currently overcrowded homes. These options could be made more accessible with appropriate KDC regulations and support regarding alternative housing options. This would also increase employment opportunities for Māori, including building apprenticeships, with positions specifically for Māori apprentices.

Recommendations

NPBS recommends that KDC:

- work closely with local community and government organisations, and iwi and hapū, to create sustainable housing solutions for Māori, that enable home ownership in ways that are meaningful for Māori, for example, use of multi-owned land.

³³ NZ Government. (2018, 11 May). Programme to fight homelessness to be expanded to Whangārei and Northland. Wellington, NZ: NZ Government. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/programme-fight-homelessness-be-expanded-Whangārei-and-northland>

³⁴ George, et.al., 2021.

³⁵ Te Hiku Media. (2023, 30 August). *Te Pouahi O Te Taitokerau: Māori Housing in Northland*. Northland: Te Hiku Media. Retrieved from <https://tehiku.nz/te-hiku-tv/haukainga/39449/te-pouahi-o-te-taitokerau-maori-housing-in-northland>

³⁶ NZ Government. (2022, 31 October). *Support Package to build new homes in Te Taitokerau*. Press Release. Wellington, NZ Govt. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/support-package-build-new-homes-te-taitokerau>

- prioritise reducing emissions from existing and new houses while maximising health and equity co-benefits. This would support emissions goals, reduce household bills for whānau, and improve health outcomes through making it easier for whānau to keep their homes dry and warm. Pathways to this include:
 - the installation of clean heating and insulation to existing homes;
 - supporting and investing in new, zero carbon, healthy, accessible social housing;
 - enabling high efficiency, low emissions home heating³⁷;
 - working with Māori and iwi with regard to collaborative housing initiatives that are meaningful for Māori.

2.4 Prosperous economy

Equitable investment

Efforts to reduce inequities in health and wellbeing through action on the wider determinants of health will benefit society in many ways. It will have a profound effect on the quality and longevity of life for everyone, and not just those at the bottom of the socio-economic gradient, those who suffer the most from material deprivation, or those who are exposed to negative life course events. It could also benefit the wider economy too – productivity losses through illness, societal costs associated with effects of mental illness, violence (including the costs of law enforcement and incarceration), numbers of people receiving benefits would all decrease through more equitable delivery of government services including health services.³⁸

Acting on health equity requires us to prioritise the needs of those experiencing the greatest socioeconomic disadvantage, and shape approaches that are effective in achieving equity. Where universal actions are required, the intensity of these actions must be proportionate to the level of disadvantage, so that those most in need receive the most benefit.³⁹

Recommendations

NPBS acknowledges the complex decisions before KDC regarding investment in several areas that are core to upholding community health, wellbeing and safety. These include deferrals of local road

³⁷ Ora Taiao, NZ Climate & Health Council. (2020). See <https://www.orataiao.org.nz/>

³⁸ NZ College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM). (2023). *Position Statement: Health as an investment, 2017*. Retrieved from <https://nzcpmh.org.nz/Policy-Statements/10944/>

³⁹ NZCPHM. (2023). *Position Statement: Choosing Wisely – Recommendations & explanatory statements, 2019*. Retrieved from <https://nzcpmh.org.nz/Policy-Statements/10944/>

improvements, traffic calming interventions, and the next phase of the Mangawhai shared path; projects that will increase road safety and promote active transport in the District.

NPHS recommends:

- that the decided mix of funding and investment in the current LTP be distributed with equity as the leading priority;
- further collaboration with key partners, including NPHS, and the community in these areas, to find solutions that meet aspirational levels of provision for healthy environments.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on KDC's LTP 2024–2027. NPHS and KDC share a commitment to achieve wellbeing for all who live in Kaipara under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This submission highlights opportunities for KDC to meet this commitment through their planning activities, namely through:

1. Working in partnership with Māori to design and deliver solutions that respond to the aspirations of tāngata whenua.
2. Delivering a strong equity approach to ensure all communities have access to activities, discussions and resources that affect their ability to achieve better outcomes for their families and communities within Kaipara. This involves embedding equity as a central framework in all planning, monitoring and decision-making.
3. Ongoing investment in activities and programmes that will enhance climate resilience in the Kaipara, with a particular focus on water resilience.
4. Prioritising activities that will contribute to increasing the proportion of the community living with access to safe and affordable housing, and healthy drinking water.

The strongest recommendation NPHS can make, is that KDC applies a public health and equity lens over all their activities. NPHS — Northern Region is committed to working alongside KDC to achieve common objectives, including promoting the wellbeing of the population of Kaipara and steering the district through the challenges it faces into a healthy, sustainable future.