



A health system that delivers for everyone

Tend's election priorities for a healthier Aotearoa New Zealand

Together, Tend and The Doctors form one of New Zealand's leading primary and urgent care networks, caring for hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders across communities throughout the country each year.

Operating at this scale has reinforced something we see every day: many of the biggest barriers to better healthcare are not clinical. They are structural, funding models, data systems, workforce settings and regulation designed for a very different health system.

We come to this as operators. Across Tend and The Doctors, we deliver care every day while also building and testing new models to improve how New Zealanders access healthcare. We measure what works, change course when the evidence tells us to and have the scale to understand what delivers better access, outcomes, equity and value across the communities we serve. We also believe we have a responsibility to share what we learn and contribute constructively to how the system evolves.

For too long, the national conversation about health has focused on what is wrong. We should be more ambitious about what is possible.

Aotearoa New Zealand, is a country of just over five million people, with significant investment in health, talented clinicians and the ability to make change at national scale. Funding matters, but so does how effectively we use it. The opportunity is to focus investment on the things that will make the greatest difference to access, experience, outcomes, equity, and productivity.

We have every opportunity to build a health system that is among the best in the world.

Success should be judged by what the system delivers for people: whether they can get care when they need it, whether outcomes are improving, whether inequities are closing, whether the workforce is thriving and whether we are getting the best possible health outcomes from every dollar invested.

Meaningful reform cannot reset every electoral cycle. New Zealand needs a 10-year, bipartisan and cross-party health plan that creates certainty and gives the system the stability required to deliver measurable improvements.

We are calling on the next Government to commit to five priorities, backed by one critical system enabler, and to work across Parliament so the direction of travel endures beyond any single term of government.



1. Fund what works

Every health dollar should deliver more value. We should shift investment towards prevention, primary and community care that improves outcomes and reduces avoidable demand elsewhere in the system. Fund what works, scale what delivers results and stop funding what does not.

Providers should be accountable for access, equity, productivity, patient experience and measurable outcomes. At the same time, we need to remove duplication, low-value activity, unnecessary administration and bureaucracy that consume time and money without improving patient care.

- Rapidly scale models of care that demonstrably improve outcomes or productivity
- Invest more in primary and community care, with funding increasingly tied to measurable improvements in access, outcomes, equity, productivity and value
- Increase investment in health promotion, prevention, and early intervention and ensure this investment is increased over time as a percentage of Vote Health
- Close New Zealand's medicines access gap by investing in medicines where the evidence shows better outcomes and value across the health system
- Make mental health support in primary and community care more effective, with earlier intervention, clearer pathways and greater accountability for outcomes and value
- Identify and stop duplicated services, unnecessary processes and interventions that do not improve patient outcomes or value.

2. Make it easier to get healthcare

People should be able to get the right care, in the right place, at the right time and from the right person, without having to navigate a fragmented system. That means better access to same-day and after-hours care, smarter use of digital care and making full use of our clinical workforce.

It also means preparing now for an ageing population by strengthening primary, community, home-based and palliative care so older New Zealanders and kaumātua can stay well and out of hospital where possible.

- Fund primary care as a key lever for reducing avoidable hospital admissions, with clear targets for access, hospital avoidance, outcomes and value
- Ensure people can access same-day primary care when they need it, with stronger after-hours and urgent care options in the community
- Continue expanding team-based care so patients are seen by the right clinician for their need, including nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, paramedics and allied health professionals, rather than defaulting every interaction to a GP
- Expand virtual consultations, remote monitoring and digital-first pathways where they can safely improve access and convenience.
- Accelerate hospital-at-home, home-based and community models of care
- Build a 10–15 year plan for an ageing population, urgently strengthening primary, community, palliative and aged care before the full impact of the baby boomer generation is felt, with better pathways between hospital and community services.

3. Digital capability must be treated as essential health infrastructure

Digital capability is core health infrastructure, not an optional programme, and is globally recognised as a game changer for health systems. The current Government's Health Digital Investment Plan sets the right direction towards a more connected, interoperable system. The priority now must be implementation and bi-partisan support.

The next Government should fully fund and accelerate the Health Digital Investment Plan across the whole health system, including primary and community care.

- Fully fund and accelerate implementation of the 10-year Health Digital Investment Plan across the whole health system
- Fund adoption of national standards for data, identity and information sharing, not just their development
- Make interoperability a national priority so information follows the patient across primary, community and hospital care
- Invest in technology that reduces administrative burden and gives clinicians more time with patients
- Build the secure infrastructure needed for AI, automation and emerging technology
- Give people and whānau greater access to and control over their health information while protecting privacy and trust

4. Back our health workforce

A healthy health system needs a healthy, supported workforce. New Zealand needs a long-term strategy to recruit, train and retain doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health, mental health and community health workers. We also need to make much better use of the workforce we already have and free clinicians from unnecessary administration.

- Continue to expand scopes of practice for nurses, pharmacists, midwives and allied health, supported by strong recertification and quality assurance frameworks
- Grow domestic training, retention and return-to-practice pathways, with deliberate planning from secondary school through tertiary and postgraduate training into funded roles, particularly for experienced nurses
- Make New Zealand internationally competitive for health talent through faster recruitment and registration, competitive employment conditions, relocation support and clearer pathways to long-term practice and residency.
- Reduce unnecessary compliance and administrative workload so clinicians can spend more time delivering care, while enabling safer staffing and more flexible models of care.

5. Close the health equity gap

Equity needs to move from aspiration to accountability. We should be able to see where gaps are closing, where they are not and whether investment is reaching the people who need it most.

Set clear, measurable targets to eliminate inequities, including for Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, and rural communities, while targeting funding and services according to demonstrated need, access barriers and health outcomes.

- Set transparent national equity measures and targets so we can see where gaps persist, including for Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people and rural communities
- Target funding and services according to demonstrated need, access barriers and health outcomes
- Support consistent national models and standards, while enabling locally tailored primary and social care responses where community needs and social determinants differ, including models co-designed with iwi, Iwi Māori Partnership Boards, Pacific providers, and local communities.
- Require health organisations to demonstrate measurable progress on reducing inequities
- Publish outcomes so New Zealanders can see whether gaps are closing

System enabler: Modernise health regulation

Regulation should protect patients without unnecessarily restricting access, innovation or workforce capacity. Professional colleges and regulators have a significant influence on workforce supply, training pathways, scopes of practice and how quickly new models of care can be adopted. These decisions need to be transparent, evidence based and accountable to the wider needs of patients and the health system.

- Ensure professional regulation supports both patient safety and timely access to care
- Increase transparency and independent accountability in regulatory and college decision-making
- Expand supervision options for qualified international clinicians, including remote, shared and cross-region supervision models where appropriate, so rural and remote communities are not disadvantaged by limited local supervisor availability
- Enable scopes of practice to evolve with new models of care and technology
- Regularly review regulation for unnecessary cost, delay or workforce constraints

We can start now

We also do not need to wait for wholesale reform to get started. Some changes can begin now: scaling models already shown to work, reducing unnecessary administration and duplication, expanding team-based and virtual care, improving transparency of outcomes and removing practical barriers that stop the workforce working to its full potential. These are changes that can build momentum while the larger reforms are delivered.

The test for the next Government

The test should be simple. Can New Zealanders get care when they need it? Are outcomes improving? Are inequities reducing? Is the workforce thriving? Are we getting more health for every dollar spent?

That means routinely measuring access, clinical outcomes, equity and patient experience and publishing the results transparently, so the system is accountable for improvement rather than just activity.

Aotearoa New Zealand has every opportunity to build a health system that is among the best in the world. We have the scale, the talent and the resources. What we need now is greater ambition, clearer priorities and the discipline to stay the course.

If we focus on what works, measure what matters and keep improving, we can deliver better health for every New Zealander and build a system future generations can be proud of.

About Tend Health

Tend Health is a Kiwi-owned primary healthcare provider, founded in 2020. Together with The Doctors, we care for hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders through a nationwide network of primary and urgent care clinics, supported by virtual and digital healthcare services. Our shareholders include iwi, reflecting a shared commitment to the long-term health and wellbeing of communities across Aotearoa.

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