The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) recommends the prioritisation of the health and social issues summarised below in order to better the health status of our country and all its citizens. The NZCPHM is committed to honouring the Treaty of Waitangi and, in accordance with the articles of the Treaty, advocating for equal health status for Māori and non-Māori. The NZCPHM also advocates for equal health status for Pacific, Asian and other minority ethnic groups.

**The NZCPHM recommends the following priorities for an incoming government:**

1. The provision of adequate, warm, dry, affordable housing for all New Zealanders. Currently, the New Zealand housing stock is inadequate and unaffordable for many people. Implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure our population has access to healthy and affordable housing is one of the most cost-effective measures that could be undertaken to improve the health, safety and economy of New Zealand and its citizens. Improved housing would not only reduce the risks of crowding-related infectious diseases and social problems, but also positively impact other public health issues such as the rheumatic fever epidemic, climate change (conceivably, well insulated houses use less fossil fuels), and facilitate achievement of health equity.

2. The NZCPHM recommends actions to improve the health of the nation’s children, drawing on ‘The Best Start in Life’ report and the Children’s Commissioner’s EAG report. The NZCPHM Council has committed itself to raising the issue of child poverty in New Zealand at the highest level as a result of concern from the NZCPHM membership and the wider public health community regarding the prevalence (20-25% of children) and persistence of child poverty in our society. The NZCPHM considers that the health, social and economic impacts of child poverty are unacceptable. Our members are concerned that these impacts are compounding over time and are a cause of avoidable inequalities in health status.

3. The NZCPHM supports the Ministry of Health’s goal to reduce rates of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) in Māori and Pacific young people to European/other levels by 2020. Māori and Pacific children bear an unequal burden of ARF in New Zealand, with the disease being a significant cause of morbidity in these populations. The subsequent incidence of Rheumatic Heart Disease is also high resulting in significant hospitalisation and death among Māori and Pacific young adults. The NZCPHM supports a comprehensive approach to the elimination of the primary drivers of rheumatic fever and other childhood infections through improvements in housing, socio-economic conditions and more accessible healthcare for the most disadvantaged New Zealanders.

4. The development of a sustainable transport environment where active travel (such as walking and cycling) and public transport are prioritised and represent realistic and safe alternatives to travelling by car. Developing infrastructure in a way that makes active or public transport safe and easy will lead to improved community health, less personal car use (which reduces carbon emissions), more financially feasible transport options, and a safer, family-friendly community.

5. The support and strengthening of measures aimed at changing New Zealand’s drinking culture and reducing the hazardous consumption of alcohol. Strategies to change New Zealand’s hazardous drinking culture require a range of actions addressing supply, demand, and harm minimisation. In particular the NZCPHM recommends adoption of all the measures proposed in the recent Law Commission Report. The NZCPHM notes that these proposals are consistent with, and would give effect to, World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations within New Zealand.
Continued action based on the Māori Affairs Select Committee recommendations in 2010 for making Aotearoa New Zealand a smoke-free nation by 2025. Smoking cessation alone is a highly effective public health intervention. The NZCPHM supports the numerous measures across different levels proposed by the Smokefree Coalition in attaining this goal. There is strong scientific evidence that population-level tobacco control interventions such as increasing the unit price of tobacco products, mass media campaigns, smoking cessation, school-based education programmes, and smoke-free environments legislation are effective in reducing the prevalence of smoking.

Promoting the immunisation of children and adults in line with the National Immunisation Schedule, to achieve the high coverage rates required to prevent outbreaks, eradicate disease, and provide personal protection. The NZCPHM supports the influential role of health professionals in providing accurate and evidence-based information on immunisation and strongly supports Government efforts to promote high coverage levels across the population.

Promoting the use of community water fluoridation as an important public health measure in the maintenance of oral health, the prevention of tooth decay and the reduction of health inequalities. There is consistent evidence of the effectiveness and safety of community water fluoridation programmes in assisting in the maintenance of oral health regardless of social, economic, or cultural group when fluoride is present between 0.7 – 1.0 ppm.

Promotion of the understanding of the public health consequences of climate change, and the provision of leadership in preventing and preparing for those consequences. The NZCPHM promotes the public health co-benefits of action on climate change, where mitigating climate change will also benefit population health in other ways. There is also considerable overlap (public health co-benefit) between emissions reduction measures and important public health and equity gains. For example, transport infrastructure redesign to encourage active travel, healthy eating (including reduced red meat and animal fat consumption), and improving home insulation provide significant other public health benefits as well as helping mitigate climate change. The NZCPHM endorses public health action with climate change co-benefits.

Openness and transparency in debating the potential health impacts of any free trade agreements, such as the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), particularly on critical areas such as pharmaceutical pricing mechanisms, climate change mitigation and other environmental policy, and public policy. The NZCPHM supports the supply of effective medicines at an affordable cost, and acknowledges the PHARMAC model as a successful model of cost containment for the provision of pharmaceuticals. The NZCPHM recommends that the key features of PHARMAC’s operation be preserved in any negotiated TPPA or other free trade agreements.

References
Background Information
The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine represents the medical specialty of public health medicine in New Zealand. It is responsible for setting training standards for public health medicine, the examination and assessment of candidates, conferring Fellowship of the College, administering a recertification programme for Public Health Physicians in New Zealand, and acting as a Branch Advisory Body for the Medical Council of New Zealand.

One important goal of the College is to effectively advocate for public health and health equity and, to this end, the College develops policies regarding important public health issues. This paper is a compilation of recommended actions from the core public health policy statements that have been developed by the College since its establishment in 2008. For more information and action points regarding health equity, please refer to the New Zealand Medical Associations’ Statement on Health Equity, endorsed by NZCPHM in 2012.

NZCPHM Policy Statements
The NZCPHM has policy statements available online (www.nzcphm.org.nz) on the following topics:

- Alcohol Policy Statement
- Climate Change Policy Statement
- First 1000 Days Policy Statement
- Health Equity Policy Statement
- Housing Policy Statement
- Immunisation Policy Statement
- Rheumatic Fever Policy Statement
- Screening Policy Statement
- Tobacco Control Policy Statement
- Trans Pacific Partnership Policy Statement
- Transport Policy Statement
- Water Fluoridation Policy Statement