

# Declaration of the Inaugural New Zealand Population Health Congress, Auckland, 6-8 October 2014

Hauora: Takoha Mai

Takoha Atu.

**With your effort and our effort we will overcome all odds**

**With your gift and our gifts we will achieve great success**

## Background to this Declaration

Three primary partner organisations; the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand (HPF), the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) and the Public Health Association of New Zealand (PHA), organised the first New Zealand Population Health Congress held in October 2014. The theme was **‘Connecting Communities, Policy and Science’**.

This declaration is a statement of commitment by those who attended the Congress and fellow members of the partner organisations to strengthen our working relationships. It builds on our complementary contributions to improving population health. This declaration identifies our priorities for collective action in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific nations with which we are closely linked. It also highlights the global nature of many of the factors that impact on health and well-being. We will take action on these commitments and review our progress in three years.

## Commitment to action for population health in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific nations

Building on Te Tiriti o Waitangi as our foundation, the co-hosts of the New Zealand Population Health Congress 2014 and our members affirm our commitment to collaborate to

- actively grow and develop our population health workforce, pursuing excellence in all aspects of our work;
- develop and maintain relationships with stakeholders across sectors, with communities and fellow citizens, working to understand our common challenges and to identify and implement solutions;
- create a robust evidence base for population health so that health status and health threats are made visible along with valid evidence about the effectiveness of policies and programmes;
- promote and lead healthy public policies and programmes;
- confront social, political and economic forces that lead to: inequities and breaching of human rights, particularly in indigenous communities; and increasing environmental degradation;
- work to make healthy choices the easy choices wherever people live, work, worship, learn, travel or play.

We have identified the following, inter-related, priorities for our collective action:

1. Giving all children of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific nations, with which we are closely linked, the best start in life.
2. Improving health and reducing health inequities.
3. Urgently addressing climate change and planetary health.

## Our priority actions for population health

### 1. Giving all children of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific nations the best start in life

We will work to support implementation of local and international best practice recommendations to address child poverty, prevent child abuse and improve child health outcomes.<sup>i</sup>

### 2. Improving health and reducing health inequities

We will support whole-of-society approaches to improving health and reducing health inequities. This requires:

- provision of culturally appropriate, affordable and accessible health services;

- actions to reduce the prevalence and impact of key drivers for ill-health and death (including tobacco use, alcohol misuse, unhealthy nutrition, low levels of physical activity, obesity, community violence);
- attention to the importance of healthy housing, immunisation, clean water and air, food and environments free from contamination;
- the promotion of mental well-being and resilience;
- actions to address the fundamental social, economic and political structural factors that sustain inequitable distributions of power, money and resources (including racism, sexism, colonisation, vested economic interests and inequitable economic models).

### **3. Urgently addressing climate change and planetary health**

We will work to galvanise action from all sectors of society to address the urgent and serious threat of climate change and environmental degradation. We will support a ‘just transition’ to a low carbon future that protects those most disadvantaged in the process and that recognises the rights of climate refugees. Capitalising on the co-benefits for health of well-designed climate policies, starting points are:

- the health system taking leadership in addressing its own environmental impact,
- more ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and
- clear strategies to achieve those targets that align with health and equity goals.

### **Key drivers for our collective commitment to action**

Actions to promote and protect the health of human communities and our planet require collaboration and the ‘organised efforts of society’. The kaupapa of collective action is clear in the rich heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand’s founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and other frameworks that guide our work.<sup>ii</sup> This approach has been reaffirmed more recently in the acknowledgement by policy commentators that many of the challenges to human and planetary health are ‘complex’ interdependent problems. Tackling complex problems requires collaborative and innovative approaches, drawing on the strengths of science, technology, ethics and communities themselves.

We affirm the following as key drivers for our approach to collaborative action:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the legitimate foundation for our policies and practice and acting to advance healthy futures for Māori;
- The prevention of ill-health and the promotion of hauora - a broad understanding of health, described in Māori, Pacific and other indigenous models of health and health promotion;
- Leadership for health equity in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific so as to create societies that are intolerant towards inequities and that affirm everyone’s right to hauora;
- The use of knowledge and evidence, in its many forms, to inform practice and to maximise the effectiveness of our use of the taonga of public health resources;
- The intimate link between improving and sustaining the health and development of human communities and populations and the health of our planet.

We strive to be a collective workforce in whom the multicultural public of Aotearoa New Zealand and Pacific nations have confidence, respect and trust. We celebrate our diversity and the many facets of our society and cultures that we represent. We seek to lead effectively from ‘behind, beside and in front’ to address the complex problems confronting us. We also seek to contribute to international thinking and action on the important drivers of poor health and lead by example in global settings where we can.

A bibliography for this Declaration is available on the websites of the three Congress partner organisations. There will also be a Te Reo Māori version available at the same link (under development).

<sup>i</sup> Public Health Advisory Committee’s 2010 report, *The Best Start in Life*; Children’s Commissioner’s Expert Advisory Group’s 2012 report, *Solutions to Child Poverty in NZ: Evidence for Action*; NZ Government’s Health Select Committee’s 2013 report on improving child health outcomes and preventing child abuse; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>ii</sup> E.g. World Health Organization’s *Human Rights-based Approach to Health* (1946); *Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care* (1978); *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (1985); *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (1986); *Te Pae Māhutonga* (1999); *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007); *‘Ala Mo’ui* (2010); *The Future We Want Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference statement* (2012).