



20 November, 2020

Hon Andrew Little  
Minister of Health  
Parliament  
Wellington

Dear Minister,

**Briefing, Carers NZ and NZ Carers Alliance**

Please find attached our Briefing for Incoming Ministers, which has also been shared with Ministers Sepuloni and Hipkins. It outlines priorities and recommendations for New Zealand's 430,000+ family carers; many of these recommendations sit within the Health portfolio, and align with the Mahi Aroha Carers' Strategy and its Action Plan for 2019-2023.

Historically the carer movement has been kept at arm's length from the Minister of Health, with most interaction devolved to the Associate Minister of Health for Disability. We ask to have a direct relationship with you, as family carers are your biggest workforce whose role extends to all parts of Health. Having the Minister of Health take an interest in their role and welfare will be meaningful to carers and to us. We seek a meeting with you to discuss some of the priorities in our Briefing.

- Ensuring that carers are seen as a large population in their own right, not tacked onto the silos of disability, mental health, older people, and other populations. This is a major change that recognises (reinforced by the impacts of Covid-19) that carers need their own focus to ensure fair outcomes for them.
- Ensuring the carer movement is woven into the work of the Health and Disability System Review. Carers received scant mention in the Review despite their important role. How can the valuable work of family carers be recognised and supported in the upcoming system changes? How can the carer movement be involved from the earliest stages of this work, so carers are not forgotten and taken for granted in its outcomes?
- Ensuring that New Zealand's respite system is fairly resourced, and gives carers choice and opportunity to have breaks from their role. Good working conditions for the paid workforce are rightly an important focus of Health – the same should be true for family carers, most of whom are unpaid, and many of whom 'work' 24/7 with little support or respite. We ask to work with you to improve New Zealand's fractured respite system.
- Ensuring that Health does not continue to over-rely on 'natural supports' e.g. the unpaid work of carers to minimise state funding burdens. People are living longer with higher support needs than past generations. Two thirds of carers are women of working age. An important outcome of the Health and Disability System Review would be to modernise the system so carers are fairly valued, including through an efficient payment system that ensures carers with high responsibilities are paid to offset loss of earnings from other paid work. There are flaws with the current system, little apparent long-term planning for this important support, and DHBs have not responded adequately to offer payment as an option for carers in their populations. We look forward to working with you to improve this important area for carers.
- Ensuring that environmental harm caused by products used to provide care at home e.g. continence supplies are minimised through public education, supplier contributions, and research about the environmental impacts of these products.
- Ensuring that emerging flexible funding models and 'system transformation' work well for carers. Currently they over-rely on natural supports e.g. the unpaid work of family carers. We look forward to working with you to address these injustices, and to give carers a voice in the evolution of these models.

Thank you Minister, we look forward to working with you in the coming years in your important Health portfolio.

Sincerely,

Laurie Hilsgen  
CEO, Carers Alliance Secretariat

Roger Palairet  
Carers NZ Chair

Janine Stewart  
Carers Alliance Co-Chair

Catherine Hall  
Carers Alliance Co-Chair