



19 July 2018

Our Ref: MT18-444

Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
WELLINGTON 6143

By email: ZCB.Submissions@mfe.govt.nz

Dear Climate Change Team

Consultation on the Zero Carbon Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Zero Carbon Bill.

Introduction to general practice and the College

General practice is the medical specialty that treats patients: with the widest variety of conditions; with the greatest range of severity (from minor to terminal); from the earliest presentation to the end; and with the most inseparable intertwining of the biomedical and the psychosocial. General practitioners (GPs) treat patients of all ages, from neonates to elderly, across the course of their lives.

GPs comprise almost 40 percent of New Zealand's specialist workforce and their professional body, the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (the College), is the largest medical college in the country. The College provides training and ongoing professional development for GPs and rural hospital generalists, and sets standards for general practice. The College has a commitment to embed the three principles (participation, partnership and protection) of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) across its work, and to achieving health equity in New Zealand.

Health equity is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences in health outcomes and access to health services among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically (WHO). To achieve health equity, we advocate for:

- A greater focus on the social determinants of health (including labour, welfare, education, housing, and the environment).
- Funding and support to sustain the development of a GP workforce of sufficient capacity to meet population need for access to quality primary medical care, particularly in rural and high need areas.
- Sustained focus on measures to reduce smoking and to increase healthy food options for low-income families.
- Improved integration of primary, community, and secondary care health and social services which ensures the provision of high quality services.
- Universally accessible free primary health care for children and low-income families, because health inequities begin early and compound over the life course.
- A review of the funding model for primary care to ensure that resourcing is allocated equitably across diverse populations with differing needs.

Submission

The College acknowledges that climate change is a threat to health and equity in Aotearoa New Zealand. The College is particularly concerned that negative health impacts from the climate change are likely to disproportionately affect populations already experiencing inequitable health outcomes, including Maori and Pacific peoples as well as vulnerable populations such as elderly, young children and those with a disability and/or pre-existing medical conditions¹. The College therefore considers that the effects of climate change on health equity must be recognised by the Government and be prioritised in setting plans to meet budgets.

The College recognises that many climate actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions create health co-benefits through promoting healthier lifestyles and cleaner environment. Many health issues that our member GPs face on a daily basis, such as obesity, physical inactivity, housing-related illness and cancers, could be prevented or reduced through climate action. For example, steps taken to encourage people to use bicycles instead of cars will have significant positive health benefits through improved levels of physical activity. College considers that financial savings resulting from positive health outcomes associated with climate actions should be recognised in planning.

The College requests the Climate Change Commission to have health expertise amongst Commissioners who understand the health impacts of the climate change, to ensure that the opportunities to improve the health of New Zealanders through climate actions are recognised and advocated in the planning process.

The College also supports the technical recommendations to the Bill proposed by OraTaiao: New Zealand Climate and Health Council.

We hope you find our submission helpful. Should you require any further information or clarification please contact the College's policy team at policy@rnzcgp.org.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Thorn
Manager – Strategic Policy

¹ Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. 2016. Climate change, health and general practice in Aotearoa new Zealand and the Pacific. Wellington: RNZCGP. Available from https://rnzcgp.org.nz/RNZCGP/Advocacy/Position_statements/Climate_Change.aspx