

2. MINISTRY OF HEALTH'S *HEALTHY ACTION – HEALTHY EATING*

Officer responsible
Mary Richardson

Author
Mary Richardson (Policy Team)

The purpose of this report is for the Council to endorse the attached submission on the Ministry of Health's Healthy Action – Healthy Eating Towards an Integrated Approach to Physical Activity, Nutrition and Healthy Weight for New Zealand.

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Health is seeking feedback on the draft strategy: Healthy Action - Healthy Eating: Oranga Pūmāu – Oranga Kai. Towards an Integrated Approach to Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity for New Zealand.

Healthy Action - Healthy Eating: Oranga Pūmāu – Oranga Kai calls on the health sector to “reorient its funding and delivery of services improve to physical activity, nutrition and healthy weight”. The report also calls for a range of sectors to become involved, to strengthen and create partnerships and to provide a more integrated approach to physical activity, nutrition and healthy weight.

The development of the draft strategy Healthy Action – Healthy Eating: Oranga Pūmāu – Oranga Kai has been led by the Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health, with input from some stakeholders. It builds on existing work, national and international literature, and the experiences of people in the health and related sectors.

Submissions close **29 March 2002**. The Ministry have asked that the submissions are returned on the standard form. Responses in other formats will be considered separately.

KEY ISSUES FOR COUNCIL

Increasing rates of disease, health conditions and death can be attributed in part to obesity, lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. For example, some diseases include cancers, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, Chronic Obstructive Respiratory Disease (CORD), stroke and some mental illnesses. Increasing levels of physical activity, improving nutrition and achieving healthy weight across the population can reduce the risk of these diseases and conditions.

Physical Activity

This report concentrates on the health gains that can be made through physical activity. The Council plays an important role in increasing such activity through the Leisure Unit (recreation programmes and facilities), Parks and Waterways (open space and facilities), City Streets (cycle strategy), and Sustainable Christchurch initiatives.

Physical inactivity has been identified as a significant health risk factor and cause of premature death for New Zealanders (Ministry of Health 2001). It ranks behind smoking as the second highest modifiable risk factor for poor health, and is associated with eight percent of total deaths (Ministry of Health 1999). As many as 2600 people nationally are estimated to have died prematurely because of physical inactivity in 1996 or 1997, amounting to over 29,000 years of life lost per year (Ministry of Health 1999b; Tobias and Roberts 2001).

A cost-effectiveness study in the United States suggested that physical activity could be today's 'best buy' in health (Morris 1994). New Zealand studies on cost benefits of physical activity have conservatively suggested that a five percent increase in physical activity levels could result in savings of \$25 million through reduced health expenditure, additional years of life and decreased incapacity. \$55 million could be saved from a 10 percent increase in physical activity and \$160 million if all New Zealanders were physically active (Russell et al 1993, Bauman 1997).

Healthy Action – Healthy Eating Strategies

Healthy Action – Healthy Eating Towards an Integrated Approach to Physical Activity, Nutrition and Healthy Weight for New Zealand suggests the key opportunities for improvement are

- Target inactive people, children and young people and their families, underpinned by a life-course approach.
- Strengthen intersectoral collaboration within sectors and settings (particularly the interface with transport and regional/local councils to develop supportive environments).

- Research and monitor the impact of environments on children's physical activity levels (for example, schools, leisure facilities, movie theatres, the influence of television, computers and computer games).
- Ensure social marketing of physical activity, communicating both the health benefits and the enjoyment of physical activity.
- Promote the additional benefits of more vigorous activity.
- Support workforce development in physical activity health promotion and primary care.
- Consider the benefits of promoting non-recreational physical activity (for example, transport-commuting, incidental and household activity).
- Monitor physical activity levels. Monitor, evaluate and research physical activity interventions.

The report highlights the need for co-ordination and collaboration "across sectors and regions, between government and non-government, and involving both the public and private sectors". It argues that the wider physical, social and cultural environment has a major influence on physical activity, nutrition and healthy weight. Most of the levers to increase physical activity exist outside the health sector (for example, transport and local government).

The report notes that ensuring that such groups can access healthy lifestyle choices will result in significant health gain for New Zealand. For example, the report identifies that "people who are disadvantaged by socioeconomic status and/or by physical disability are often unable to access a wide range of services and facilities, such as health or recreation services (general practitioners, other health professionals, the weight loss industry, gyms, recreation and sports clubs, etc.)" (Ministry of Health 2001).

The report makes a series of 'suggestion for action' a number of which involve or impact on local government (outlined in Appendix 1).

SUBMISSION

It is suggested that the Council makes a brief submission focusing on the physical activity component of the report (as outlined in the attachment). This submission has drawn on the submission recently prepared for the Canterbury District Health Board.

Recommendation: That the Council endorse the submission on the Ministry of Health's "Healthy Action – Healthy Eating" report.