Making a Pacific Difference in Health Policy
Foreword

Malo e lelei,
Ni sa bula vinaka,
Talofa lava,
Kia orana,
Taloha ni,
Fakalofa lahi atu and
Greetings!

In November 1997 the Ministry of Health published *Making a Pacific Difference: Strategic initiatives for the health of Pacific people in New Zealand*, which identified key strategies for improving the health status of Pacific peoples and was the result of extensive national consultation. This document, *Making a Pacific Difference in Health Policy*, follows on the strategic initiative document by identifying the key result areas which are envisaged as the focus of Pacific health policy over the next three years.

The first milestone achieved was the appointment of the Chief Advisor Pacific Health. The publication of this document, *Making a Pacific Difference in Health Policy*, constitutes a further milestone in the progress towards improving the health status of Pacific peoples. It demonstrates that the Ministry of Health does intend to make a strategic difference in the health of Pacific peoples. To achieve this, the document identifies some key objectives and proposed strategies that will be undertaken over the next three years to achieve the desired outcomes.

The key areas are:

- Strategic Policy Advice
- Monitoring Funder Performance
- Leadership and Strengthening Relationships
- Health Sector Financing
- Ministry of Health Structure and Culture
- Relationship with Māori.

*Making a Pacific Difference in Health Policy* will require the commitment of all key players in the health and disability sector. I encourage us all to work together and take ownership of this process to ensure that there begins to be a visible and measurable difference in the health status of Pacific peoples.

Karen O Poutasi (Dr)
Director-General of Health
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Scene</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The People</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Health Issues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Overview</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Strategic Policy Advice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Monitoring Funder Performance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leadership and Strengthening Relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Health Sector Financing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ministry of Health Structure and Culture</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relationship with Māori</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Policy Advice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring Funder Performance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and Strengthening Relationships</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sector Financing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health Structure and Culture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Māori</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This document builds on *Making a Pacific Difference: Strategic initiatives for the health of Pacific people in New Zealand* and identifies the priorities for the Ministry of Health that can contribute to improving the health of Pacific peoples. It is a three-year work plan and its greatest impact will be in the area of sector leadership and practice. This document is also the culmination of numerous fono held over several years with Pacific communities in New Zealand.

As well as tightening its focus towards providing strategic policy advice and being committed to progressing *Making a Pacific Difference: Strategic initiatives for the health of Pacific people in New Zealand*, the Ministry of Health established a Chief Advisor Pacific Health position. This position’s main focus is to strengthen the Ministry’s leadership role in the sector and consolidate its knowledge base with regard to Pacific health. Significant interest and support for the position has been demonstrated, particularly following the launch of *Making a Pacific Difference: Strategic initiatives for the health of Pacific people in New Zealand* and it is a widely held perception that the Chief Advisor’s role is the initial step in implementing the strategy.

The Ministry of Health is responsible for advising the Minister of Health and the Government on Pacific peoples’ health issues. The Ministry is responsible for developing a strategic policy framework for the health and disability sector which includes improving and sustaining health gains for Pacific peoples. The development of policy advice on the health of Pacific peoples will particularly benefit from the Ministry’s close liaison with the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. A *Protocol for Policy Commentary and Information Exchange* was agreed between the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and the Ministry of Health in June 1997. This protocol specifies ways for the two Ministries to work together to improve the effectiveness of policy advice for improving health outcomes for Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

Since the appointment of the Chief Advisor Pacific Health in January 1998, several activities have been undertaken to identify the priority areas, establish agreements and processes to work with teams and groups, and provide a stocktake of current Ministry activity that relates to the health of Pacific peoples.

Following an analysis of the information collected and general discussions held with internal staff and external agencies, the work plan has been developed using a framework that reflects the Ministry’s key result areas and prioritises the work which will be undertaken. The work plan identifies key objectives, accountabilities and broad outcome measures.

The Ministry of Health would like your comments on the implementation of this work plan. They should be addressed to:

Chief Advisor Pacific Health
Ministry of Health
PO Box 5013
Wellington.

Debbie Sorensen
Chief Advisor Pacific Health
Goal

“To improve, promote and protect the health of Pacific people.”
In order to determine the priority areas, it is important to understand the current context surrounding the health status of Pacific peoples. The health of Pacific peoples is influenced not only by the quality of health care services, but also by cultural and social factors including income, education and housing. Thus the poor health status of Pacific peoples can be related to lower socioeconomic status, the ability to gain employment and the changes in traditional Pacific support structures which are often associated with adjustment to a New Zealand way of life.

The People

The following figures from the analysis of the 1996 Census by Statistics New Zealand outline the key demographic and socioeconomic features about Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 1998).

- Approximately 6 percent (202,236 people) of the resident New Zealand population is made up of people belonging to Pacific ethnic groups.
- An average of three dependent children live in two-parent families.
- Thirty-four percent of Pacific peoples live in households shared by relatives.
- Twenty-four percent of Pacific women aged 15 and over have given birth to four or more children.
- The highest educational attainment of 33 percent of all Pacific peoples is a school qualification.
- A further 19 percent hold post-school qualifications.
- Eighty-nine percent of Pacific peoples in New Zealand speak English.
- Sixty-four percent of Pacific peoples aged 15 years and over participate in the labour force.
- Pacific youth aged between 15 and 19 experience much higher unemployment than youth of the same age in the general population.
- Common occupations for employment (men) are plant and machine operators and assemblers (25 percent).
- Just under half of employed Pacific women work in clerical occupations (24 percent).
- The median annual income of all Pacific peoples aged 15 years and over is $12,400.
Key Health Issues

The key health concerns that were identified in Making a Pacific Difference provide a framework of the important issues in this document. The following facts (PHC 1994; MoH 1997; MoH in press) highlight some areas of major disparity.

Pacific peoples experience the following adverse health outcomes:

- a higher teenage fertility rate than the total New Zealand teenage female population
- the highest abortion rates
- the highest incidence of acute rheumatic fever in New Zealand
- Pacific children are admitted to hospital at a higher rate than other children
- a high incidence of vaccine-preventable disease
- low uptake of primary care
- high admissions to psychiatric services
- increasing rates of drug and alcohol abuse
- liver cancer death rates are several times greater for Pacific peoples than for European New Zealanders
- Pacific children have high rates of pneumonia, acute respiratory infections, unintentional injuries and acute rheumatic fever
- late foetal death rates are higher than the total New Zealand population
- the incidence rates for Pacific children in the 1997 measles epidemic were 10 times the rate of European children and five times that of Māori children
- Pacific children under one year of age have the highest rate of meningococcal disease in New Zealand
- unintentional injuries and suicide account for two-thirds of deaths in the 15–24-year-old age group
- In 1996, 32 percent of Pacific adults (aged 15 or more years) smoked one or more cigarettes per day and 51 percent indicated that they had never been regular smokers.

High fertility rates, increasing birth rates and a relatively youthful population combine to ensure that Pacific peoples will have a considerable impact on health and social services both now and in the future.

Given these facts, the key areas for focus and development over the next three years will be:

- health education and promotion to address lifestyle illnesses, for example, diabetes
- primary care services that are delivered in a community setting that are accessible to people
- sexual and reproductive health
- child health with particular emphasis on injury prevention
- youth health with particular emphasis on mental health
- women’s health.
Strategic Overview

The challenge for the Ministry of Health is to work with central agencies, the Health Funding Authority, the health sector, Pacific providers and the community to improve the health of Pacific peoples. This will necessarily involve providing input into strategic policy advice in the key areas that impact on Pacific health. The following six areas outline the framework from which Pacific health policy will be further developed.

1. Strategic Policy Advice

To contribute to the development of innovative strategic policy advice that will lead to better integration of approaches, improve access and promote strategies for health gain in respect of Pacific health and, in particular, child health and mental health.

2. Monitoring Funder Performance

To contribute to the development of effective account-ability and performance monitoring arrangements for the Health Funding Authority which demonstrates that funding strategies contribute to health gains in Pacific communities.

3. Leadership and Strengthening Relationships

To foster constructive relationships, collaboration and information sharing among the health sector and central agencies focusing on Pacific issues and interagency co-operation to provide high quality integrated advice to the Government.

4. Health Sector Financing

To develop policy options on how to best finance health care into the future and manage fiscal pressures/risks within the sector that consider the implications for Pacific health status.

5. Ministry of Health Structure and Culture

To support the development of Pacific peoples within the Ministry of Health and actively increase all staff’s knowledge and awareness of issues related to Pacific peoples.

6. Relationship with Māori

To support the work of Te Kete Hauora (the Māori Health Group) and ensure that Pacific policy advice is consistent with the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi. Te Kete Hauora’s role is to develop strategic policy and advise on Māori health issues for the Ministry of Health and the Government.
Strategic Policy Advice

Key Objective One

To contribute to the development of innovative strategic policy advice that will lead to better integration of approaches, improve access and promote strategies for health gain in respect of Pacific health and, in particular, child health and mental health.

Discussion

In order to achieve this objective the strategies will include providing access to information on Pacific health trends, best practice and international indigenous initiatives. A supportive infrastructure is critical, as is a supportive network to ensure the development of robust advice. The most effective strategy will entail identifying priority areas in policy advice over the next three years that are likely to have the most impact on the health of Pacific peoples. An important strategy will be the fostering of positive relationships with the Ministers of Health to improve access to quality advice on Pacific health and issues that affect them.

Outcomes

1.1 The Ministry of Health has access to up-to-date information on Pacific health trends and research.

1.2 The Ministry of Health will have current knowledge and experience of international ‘best practice’ initiatives and trends in indigenous health with specific emphasis on the Pacific.

1.3 The Ministry of Health Chief Advisors’ network integrates a Pacific perspective to all work undertaken.

1.4 The Action for Health and Independence conference provides an opportunity to identify key issues as they relate to Pacific populations and ensures that health goals will contribute to health gain for Pacific communities.
1.5 Key strategic policy advice will incorporate a Pacific perspective that will improve health outcomes for Pacific peoples in the following areas:

- the Strengthening Families Strategy
- the National Child Health Strategy
- Pacific analysis of health determinants
- Integration Project which is aimed at improving relationships between the key players in the sector
- mental health
- Pacific provider development strategy.

1.6 Ministerial advice and servicing regarding Pacific health is undertaken in a timely and accurate manner, providing quality advice.
Monitoring Funder Performance

Key Objective Two

To contribute to the development of effective accountability and performance monitoring arrangements for the Health Funding Authority (HFA) which demonstrates that funding strategies contribute to health gains in Pacific communities.

Discussion

A key role for the HFA is to fund programmes and initiatives that improve the health status of Pacific peoples and therefore encourage and support services that contribute to health gain for Pacific peoples. In monitoring the HFA, the Ministry of Health ensures that health issues for Pacific peoples are addressed.

Outcomes

2.1 The Ministry of Health will have access to information on the funding of Pacific programmes and mainstream programmes that affect Pacific peoples.

2.2 A monitoring strategy is developed for Pacific health funding and Pacific provider development.

2.3 The HFA performance reviews incorporate a Pacific perspective.
Leadership and Strengthening Relationships

Key Objective Three

To foster constructive relationships, collaboration and information sharing among the health sector and central agencies focusing on Pacific issues and interagency cooperation to provide high quality, integrated advice to the Government.

Discussion

To identify ‘best practice’ models, relationships will be further developed with Pacific and mainstream providers in the main centres and an annual Pacific health ‘think tank’ will be sponsored by the Ministry to debate and develop models of ‘best practice’. Relationship management is the key to ensuring commitment to the improvement of Pacific health status. The sharing of information and resources is critical to successful relationship management. Providing a robust knowledge base of issues related to Pacific health is also important. An effective communication strategy will improve access to this information and strengthen communication networks by encouraging the development of innovative solutions to Pacific health issues. The monitoring of existing protocols and the development of processes to work co-operatively, such as promoting the work of the Ministry at external fora, is also important to raise awareness of the key issues related to Pacific health and to stimulate the development of innovative and creative initiatives.

Outcomes

3.1 Strong relationships are developed amongst health sector and central agencies. Priorities for relationship development are:

- Ministries of Pacific Island Affairs, Education, Housing, Youth Affairs, and Women’s Affairs; the Department of Social Welfare; the New Zealand Employment Service; the New Zealand Immigration Service; and ACC
- Pasifika Medical Association
• Health Funding Authority
• Pacific providers.

3.2 The health information system incorporates appropriate Pacific ethnicity information.

3.3 Pacific models of ‘best practice’ are identified and promoted within the sector.

3.4 The Ministry of Health will have a current and comprehensive database of Pacific providers.

3.5 A communication strategy is implemented that ensures dissemination of information to Pacific communities and mainstream organisations.
Health Sector Financing

Key Objective Four

To develop policy options on how to best finance health care into the future and manage fiscal pressures/risks within the sector that consider the implications for Pacific health status.

Discussion

A barrier to health care has commonly been both the cost of access for individuals and the developmental costs to Pacific providers. Failure to improve Pacific health status will result in the continued increase of costs to the health sector, particularly in the secondary care area. In addition to this, a perceived lack of incentives to address specific Pacific health issues has contributed to isolated initiatives by mainstream providers. The Pacific community will have a major influence on health service demand and provision in the future. The specific areas such as child health, sexual and reproductive health, and services for young people will experience more demand from Pacific peoples as the population continues to grow.

Outcomes

4.1 Strategic advice regarding health and disability servicing that considers resource and demographic projections is provided to the Minister of Health.

4.2 Policy advice regarding new initiatives will consider the effects of contracting options and its implications for Pacific communities.

4.3 Pacific communities will have demonstrated an increased understanding of funding issues within the health and disability sector.
Ministry of Health Structure and Culture

Key Objective Five

To support the development of Pacific peoples within the Ministry of Health and actively increase all staff’s knowledge and awareness of issues related to Pacific peoples.

Discussion

A desirable outcome for the Ministry is that all staff understand the issues related to Pacific health and acknowledge the added value and diversity that Pacific staff bring to the organisation. It is equally important that Ministry staff develop the skills to relate in an appropriate and effective manner to the Pacific community. Possible strategies for achieving this are to increase the level of expertise in Pacific health with particular emphasis on priority areas such as child health and to implement general health education programmes for all staff.

Outcomes

5.1 The internal Pacific network adds value to the culture of the Ministry and actively supports the work of the Ministry.

5.2 Pacific staff are acknowledged for the ‘added value’ that they bring to the Ministry.

5.3 Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO), recruitment and retention policies ensure improved performance and opportunities for Pacific staff.

5.4 Ministry staff have an improved understanding of Pacific health issues through attendance at round tables, brown bag lunches and specific training.

5.5 The Ministry increases its expertise in relating to and accessing Pacific communities.

5.6 The Ministry develops protocols and guidelines for staff with regard to Pacific culture.
Relationship with Māori

Key Objective Six

To support the work of Te Kete Hauora (the Ministry of Health’s Māori Health Group) and ensure that Pacific policy advice is consistent with the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Discussion

Pacific peoples have a similar level of health status to Māori and face similar challenges. There are, therefore, considerable advantages in developing a strong relationship with Te Kete Hauora. This relationship will allow the effective sharing of ideas, mutual support and ensure the consistency of population-based policy advice throughout the Ministry.

Outcomes

6.1 Pacific health policy development considers and is responsive and supportive to Māori health policy and works within the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi.

6.2 A strong partnership is developed with Te Kete Hauora to share knowledge, experience and debate policy that will result in the improved quality of policy advice.
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funder</strong></td>
<td>The Health Funding Authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health status</strong></td>
<td>A set of measurements which reflect the health of populations. The measurements may include physical function, emotional wellbeing, activities of daily living and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidence</strong></td>
<td>The number of new cases or deaths that occur in a given period in a specified population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring</strong></td>
<td>The performance and analysis of routine measurements, aimed at detecting changes in the environment of health status of populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>The end result a programme seeks to achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pacific peoples</strong></td>
<td>The population of Pacific ethnic origin (Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Tongan, Nuiean, Fijian and Tokelauan) incorporating people born in New Zealand as well as overseas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Te Kete Hauora</strong></td>
<td>Ministry of Health’s Māori Health Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treaty of Waitangi</strong></td>
<td>The founding document of New Zealand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## References


