

Media Policy

1. Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) is dedicated to ensuring everyone gets the right healthcare when and where they need it.
2. Transforming the health sector to create a more equitable, accessible, cohesive, and people-centred system takes all of us working together with heart and a strong sense of purpose and commitment to service to improve the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders. As part of our team, your contribution to our purpose will be key to our success.
3. We are committed to creating a safe, positive, and inclusive workplace for everyone at Health NZ.
4. [Te Mauri o Rongo | The New Zealand Health Charter](#) is the overarching foundation for delivering our purpose and building a culture that cares. Its four pou, or values, support us to work with heart every day as we serve our communities. We can view Te Mauri o Rongo as a whare with four cornerstones – the whare needs all four to be working well, and together, to keep it strong. All four pou guide the way we work together, supporting and caring for each other so we can care for all New Zealanders.
5. This policy aligns with the four pou of Te Mauri o Rongo | The Health Charter to support the workforce culture Health NZ aspires to:
 - a. **Wairuatanga** – through promoting and demonstrating open communication to the public through media relating to Health NZ and its patients and employees, and all employees acting with integrity with respect to information made public.
 - b. **Rangatiratanga** – through Health NZ leadership by valuing and promoting communication.
 - c. **Whanaungatanga** – through employees across Health NZ having a collective responsibility for – and connected and engaged approach to – communication with the organisations and individuals we work with, and the patients, whānau and communities we serve.
 - d. **Te Korowai Āhuru** – through protection and appropriate stewardship of information made public relating to Health NZ employees, patients and their whānau, and a commitment to te Tiriti o Waitangi.

About the Media policy

6. This Media Policy supports the [Health Sector Principles](#) in the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 (the Pae Ora Act). These underpin the transformation of our health system to create a more equitable, accessible, cohesive, and people-centred system that will improve the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.
7. The purpose of this Media Policy is to:

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- Provide clear guidance to ensure all Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora employees understand the processes and delegations relating to engaging with the media.
 - Ensure Health NZ authorised spokespeople are identified and supported to engage with media in a constructive manner.
 - Support Health NZ to be recognised as a trusted advisor in relation to health and a source of fact-based health information.
 - To respect the rights of individual employees to speak to the media on behalf of independent organisations.
8. This policy applies to all people who perform work for Health NZ including but not limited to employees, contractors, students, interns, volunteers and visiting professionals.

Key principles

9. The following principles underpin how we work with the media:
- Health NZ recognises the importance of clear, open, and accurate communication with the public about the services we provide while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of patients and commercially sensitive information in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020, Health Information Privacy Code 2020 and other relevant legislation.
 - Media enquiries about specific patients, their conditions, or any identifiable patient information should not be disclosed unless consent is obtained and recorded from the patient or their legal representative.
 - Health NZ recognises the important role of the media in a democratic society and will respond in a timely and constructive manner to queries, including fronting spokespeople for interviews and considering requests made under our Privacy Waiver Policy.
 - Health NZ will work with the media to keep the public informed of its services, support improved health outcomes, tell our stories and to address issues of public concern.
 - Health NZ, as a crown entity, must remain and be seen to be apolitical and all employees must act in keeping with [the Public Service Commission Standards of Integrity and Conduct](#).
 - Employees making media comments should be aware of their obligations under our Code of Conduct and other Employment Policies.
 - Media communications should at all times take into account the cultural composition of our communities and ensure that appropriate communication strategies are used.

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- The media team is responsible for media liaison on behalf of the organisation and is the only communications function, except where authority is delegated by the Group Manager, Media, with the authority to liaise between the media and employees. The media team should always be the first point of contact in any staff interactions with media where the request is for the staff member to comment on behalf of the organisation. This includes in situations where employees may be approached privately or independently of the media team.

This policy is guided by:

- The [Health Sector principles](#) set out in the [Pae Ora \(Healthy Futures\) Act 2022](#), which enables Health NZ to support the Crown’s responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi I Treaty of Waitangi.
- The values, principles and behaviours within Te Mauri o Rongo I The New Zealand Health Charter which applies to all health workers in Aotearoa, ensuring they feel safe and supported at work.

Media Liaison

10. Ensuring the media team is involved in all media interactions expedites the flow of information to the media, reduces potential disruption to the business and ensures the media is getting accurate information from the appropriate source in the organisation. It also helps to keep individual staff safe.
11. Board and committee members shall be deemed to be representing the organisation at all times, unless they expressly state otherwise, or the circumstances clearly indicate otherwise.
12. At no time should any staff member be drawn into commenting ‘off the record’ to any media representative. Please refer the media representative to the media team to answer any questions via h.nzmedia@tewhatauora.govt.nz.
13. This policy does not take away the ability for employees including health professionals to raise concerns under the Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022.
14. Health NZ recognises that under some collective employment agreements, as well as the Code of Good Faith in Health, employees may make media comments in line with these documents. When making public comments or statements related to healthcare matters, employees are expected to adhere to the principles of the Code of Good Faith for public health sector (Section 14–18 of Schedule 1B Employment Relations Act 2000).
15. The media team works with the business to ensure media requests for information are responded to in a timely, accurate and consistent manner which represents the organisation in a positive manner.
16. It is the media team’s responsibility to build strong, trusted relationships with media and ensure the organisation is well supported in all aspects of media management.

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Spokespeople and communicators

17. The Board Chair/Commissioner is the spokesperson for Health NZ on all matters of government policy and matters of governance (noting the Board is separately covered by the Standards of Integrity and Conduct for Crown entity board members); this role may be delegated by the Chair to other Board members and/or the Chief Executive.
18. The Chief Executive is the principal spokesperson for all operational issues, including staff issues.
19. The Chief Executive, Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and/ Head of Communications and Engagement shall authorise specific individuals/positions to be spokespeople. This list is maintained by the media team and reviewed six-monthly or when appropriate to do so based in certain circumstances. The following general principles apply:
 - ELT members are authorised spokespeople on all matters related to their directorates. Some clinical leaders and clinical subject matter experts will be able to speak on matters related to their clinical areas of expertise or the hospital network within which they are based.
 - Tier Three Leaders may be given authority to speak on areas of their responsibility.
20. Any further authority will be a matter for the Chief Executive, ELT and/or the Head of Communications and Engagement. Changes in between ELT review will be signalled by the media team and reported to the appropriate ELT member/Chief Executive as needed e.g. should someone leave the organisation and need to be replaced as a spokesperson.
21. Staff who have authority to talk to the media on behalf of the organisation are encouraged to take a proactive approach but must always be supported by the media team. Any contact initiated by the media must be directed to the media team and to the manager of the particular part of the business.
22. If a local authorised spokesperson is to front a media interview, local communications teams must inform the national media team as early as possible via h.nzmedia@tewhatuora.govt.nz. The media team will sign off on the media approach and will ensure other parts of the business are informed and that any necessary 'no surprises' communications to our Board, Manatū Hauora / Ministry of Health and/or the Minister of Health is provided.
23. Ad-hoc permission to provide positive stories about the organisation to media may be given to staff without spokesperson authority by either the Group manager media or the Head of Communications and Engagement (when it is the Group Manager, Media who provides permission, the Head of Communications and Engagement will be advised).

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24. It is noted that some staff may be asked to respond to requests for media interviews in other professional capacities. This is outlined further below under the 'Professional and employee organisations' heading.
25. The policy applies to employees if approached by media whether they are on Health NZ premises or in a public place at the time of approach.
26. All Health NZ spokespeople must act in accordance with the public service principle of political neutrality.

Training and skills

27. All Health NZ authorised spokespeople are to be media trained to ensure they are equipped with the tools and skills to communicate and engage effectively. Training will also be refreshed at appropriate intervals.
28. The Media team is responsible for providing and coordinating media training to authorised spokespeople prior to them engaging with the media.
29. Only the media team has the authority to engage directly with media on behalf of Health NZ. The only exception to this is where a staff member is speaking in another professional capacity as outlined in 24 above.

Legislation and liability

30. Health NZ manages personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020, Health Information Privacy Code 2020 and other relevant legislation.
31. The disclosure of personal information about a patient in breach of the Health Information Privacy Code (HIPC) and/or the Privacy Act may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
32. If any staff member discloses personal information about a patient in breach of the HIPC and a complaint is made to the Privacy Commissioner, damages may be awarded under the Privacy Act.
33. Staff making public statements critical of any person or organisation should be aware that they may be personally liable if the criticism is unfounded.
34. Guidance on the organisation's position on privacy waivers is currently under development. This policy will be updated to reflect the guidance when it is completed.

No surprises approach

35. As a Crown entity we operate on a 'no surprises' basis, ensuring our Board, Manatū Hauora / Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health are informed about issues where appropriate.
36. Staff must inform the media team (either regional or national representatives) of issues that they view are likely to attract media attention or be contentious and should also share opportunities for positive media coverage.

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37. If there is likely to be significant media coverage, the Group Manager, Media will inform the Office of the Chief Executive and the relevant ELT member about the query and our response.

Access to hospitals for media, individual cases

38. Health NZ is often approached by the media to comment on individual patients, where the patient has signed a privacy waiver for us to do so. This will be done in accordance with Health NZ's Privacy Waiver Guidelines.
39. Health NZ releases condition updates on request to the media in accordance with privacy legislation.
40. Health NZ allows for patients wishing to be interviewed by the media on our premises to do so. They must be informed this needs to be arranged so that it does not impinge on the rights and privacy of other patients, visitors, or staff, or disrupt the provision of care to patients.
41. All such requests should be referred to an appropriate media or communications team member prior to the interview to determine consent and if there are any clinical reasons why an interview should not take place. The communications team member will liaise with the Clinical Nurse Manager to ensure appropriate arrangements for the media to meet with the patient.
42. In respect of prisoner patients, any access to or contact with the media while on Health NZ sites will be in accordance with the arrangements in place between Health NZ and the Department of Corrections for the care of prisoners and any Department of Corrections requirements.

Photography and filming on site

43. Media are not to be given access to sites for the purpose of photography, filming or recording without permission from the Hospital's Director. This permission should be provided to the media outlet in writing and facilitated by the appropriate communications team member.
44. When such permission is given, the Group Manager, Media is to be advised. A communications team member must accompany media while they are on the premises.
45. Staff members should immediately contact security and the hospital media and communications team to seek support if a television film crew or news photographer is trying to take photographs or film on site.
46. Filming or photography of Health NZ sites or employees in or from a public place is permissible and is not covered by this policy.

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Professional and employee organisations

47. Members of staff who are spokespeople for professional or employee associations and groups may make statements to express the views of their organisations.
48. In doing so, they must state clearly that they are communicating in the capacity of those associations and groups, not as employees of Health NZ, nor may they associate Health NZ with them.
49. While Health NZ affirms the right of any staff member to attend any professional and employee organisation meeting and to speak on their own behalf, they should take care not to associate Health NZ with their individual views.

Official Information requests

50. Any request for information held by Health NZ is covered by the Official Information Act 1982. An individual requesting information about themselves, including medical records, is a request under the Privacy Act 2020.
51. Refer to the Official Information Act and Privacy policies for more information.

Publications

52. This policy also covers the publishing of content for public view on Health NZ channels including, website and social media.
53. A separate Social Media Policy outlines how the organisation and staff should manage social media.

Definitions and translations

For the purposes of this policy, 'media' is defined as the below.

Word / Term	Definition
Media	Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, websites, their social media channels, blogs, and all staff who work for those organisations or channels including journalists, producers, directors, management and presenters.

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
All employees	All employees are responsible for complying with this policy
People managers	Responsible for ensuring staff understand this policy
Group Manager, Media	Responsible for updating this policy in accordance with the review timelines.

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Role	Responsibilities
Head of Communications and Engagement	Responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented and complied with.
Chief Executive	Responsible to the Board for reporting on the policy's implementation and compliance.

Non-compliance with policy

- If people to whom this policy applies don't comply with this Policy, Health NZ may need to take action in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- If a Board member doesn't comply with this Policy, they may breach their duties under the Crown Entities Act 2004, and they may be removed from the Board.

Monitor and review

- The policy owner is responsible for providing assurance of the effectiveness of this policy.
- Key performance indicators that measure the effectiveness of this policy are incorporated into routine internal audit undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Policy Owner.

Related policies, and legislation

Associated policies	Associated legislation
Social Media Policy	Privacy Act 2020
Privacy Waiver Guidelines	Health Information Privacy Code 2020
Brand Guidelines	Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996
Official Information Act Policy	Employment Relations Act 2000
Privacy Policy	
Code of Conduct	

Need more information?

- Your leader and the Communications and Engagement Team can give you context and more information about what's in this Media Policy.

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