Providing world-class health services

Good health is hugely important to families. A strong public health service gives families peace of mind – knowing that the care they need will be there, when they need it.

In tight financial times, when many countries have frozen or reduced their funding of public health services, National has protected and grown our health service with average increases of around $500 million a year.

National’s unrelenting commitment to building a strong economy over the last six years means we have been able to invest in maintaining and improving our health services.

Continuing to invest more in world-class health services

We remain committed to strengthening our economy so we can continue to invest more in providing world-class health services for New Zealanders.

We’re focused on key areas where we are making real progress:

- Improved access to elective procedures, with 44,000 more elective operations now than in 2008.
- Shorter waits for cancer treatment, with patients ready for chemotherapy or radiation treatment receiving it within a maximum of 4 weeks - the world gold standard.
- Shorter stays in emergency departments, with 94 per cent of patients seen within the six hour target – the best result ever.

As a result of our careful financial management, the country is returning to surplus and we now have the opportunity to invest even further in our public health service.

Policy highlights

- $50 million extra over 3 years to reduce pain in bones, muscles and joints, and provide more operations.
- A new cancer target – 90 per cent of patients will receive their first cancer treatment within 62 days of being referred by their GP with a high suspicion of cancer.
- Increased funding for hospices of $20 million a year.
NATIONAL IS . . .

**DELIVERING MORE ELECTIVE OPERATIONS**
- Increased elective surgery by 44,000 operations – from 118,000 a year to 162,000 a year.
- Building more operating theatres to help increase delivery of elective surgery.
- Staffing numbers continue to increase and we now have 1,500 more doctors and 3,300 more nurses working in our district health boards.

**DELIVERING MORE SPECIALIST ASSESSMENTS**
- Increased the number of patients getting assessed by hospital specialists to see if they need surgery or other treatment.
- Reduced the waiting times for these appointments.
- Invested more than $100 million extra into improving cancer services over the last 6 years.
- Invested in providing ten new linear accelerators.
- Providing more personalised medical support for cancer sufferers.
- Expanding the role of nurses in cancer care.

**INVESTING IN DIAGNOSTICS**
- Investing an extra $11 million to deliver more colonoscopies and improve waiting times for diagnostic tests.
- Commencing centralised collection of colonoscopy data for the first time in our history.

**BOOSTING HOSPICE FUNDING**
- Already provided an extra $15 million a year to hospices across the country.
- Increased the proportion of average hospice funding provided by the Government from 50 per cent to 70 per cent, enabling hospices to continue delivering high-quality services to those who need them.
OUR RESULTS SO FAR

ELECTIVE SURGERY NUMBERS HAVE HIT RECORD LEVELS

- An extra 44,000 patients are now getting elective surgery compared to 2008.
- Reduced the number of patients waiting over six months for their surgery to nil, through more operations.

FIRST SPECIALIST ASSESSMENTS AT RECORD LEVELS

- An extra 45,000 patients are getting First Specialist Assessments, with the total number of assessments reaching 306,000.
- Reduced the number of patients having to wait over six months for their First Specialist Assessment to nil, because of this increased number of appointments.

CANCER PATIENTS TREATED FASTER, AND IN NEW ZEALAND

- No patients have had to fly to Australia for cancer treatment because of capacity delays, as they did under Labour.
- All patients ready for radiation or chemotherapy treatment, now commence that treatment within a maximum of four weeks.
- Since the Government funded 12 months of Herceptin in 2008, 1,095 women have received approval for 12 months treatment – the international standard.

CANCER PATIENTS ARE GETTING MORE PERSONALISED SUPPORT

- Providing 59 new dedicated cancer nurses to give patients personalised and dedicated care across the country.
- Providing each of New Zealand’s six cancer centres with an additional specialist psychologist to help meet the needs of patients.
- Up to 20 cancer support workers funded for major hospitals to provide more counselling services for patients.
WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT…

1. REDUCE PAIN, INCREASE PREVENTION

➔ Invest to reduce pain, increase prevention

Orthopaedic surgery is amongst the fastest growing areas of health demand.

This includes pain associated with, but not exclusive to arthritis, lower back pain, hips and knees. And up to a quarter of GP consultations are related to arthritis, lower back pain, orthopaedic or other bone, muscle and joint conditions.

National will invest $50 million over three years to reduce pain in bones, muscles and joints, and provide more operations. National will:

➔ Invest $30 million to further lift the number of orthopaedic operations, including an increase in hip and knee operations.

➔ Invest $6 million to create new multi-disciplinary early intervention teams to address pain, and improve the quality of life for New Zealanders in relation to pain in bones, muscles and joints.

➔ Invest $14 million for extra general surgeries. This new funding will include a focus on areas such as hernia, gallstone and vein conditions.

➔ Continue to increase funding for elective surgery and First Specialist Assessments, and increase the number of people receiving these services.
2. SPEED UP CANCER TREATMENT

→ Set a new cancer treatment target

Under National, cancer services have improved significantly.

We have invested over $100 million extra to provide more and faster services to patients with cancer. Our focus is now on speeding up diagnostic tests such as MRIs, X-Rays, CT scans and blood tests - all of which deliver critical information to specialists.

We also want to give patients the confidence that from their GP’s first suspicion of cancer, they will be seen by a specialist quickly, and treated sooner.

National will:

→ Set a new cancer treatment target for the maximum time patients will wait for their first cancer treatment, starting from the time they are first referred to the hospital because their doctor suspects they may have cancer.

→ The target is that 90 per cent of patients will receive their first cancer treatment within 62 days of being referred by their GP with a high suspicion of cancer. This is an international benchmark.

→ Commit $41 million from the existing health budget to the cancer treatment programme over the next three years, to achieve the new target by July 2017.

3. INCREASE HOSPICE FUNDING BY $20 MILLION A YEAR

→ Expanding services and resources for hospices

The country’s 29 hospices have become centres of excellence for palliative care, supporting people as they approach the end of their lives whilst caring for their family/whānau as well.

Extra funding will allow hospices to expand their care and services across the wider health system to better support people with life limiting illnesses who are living in rest homes or being cared for by primary care and home-based support services.

National will:

→ Invest $13 million to help hospices expand their community palliative care services into better supporting terminally ill people at home and in aged care facilities.

→ Expand hospice-based palliative care teams involving physicians, nurses, pharmacists, counsellors and social workers to provide support and advice across the health system.

→ Invest $7 million of new funding to create 60 new nurse specialist palliative care educator and support roles at hospices to provide training, mentoring and hands-on support for staff across rest homes, primary care and home-based support services.