



5 June 2020

Dr Meng Foon
Race Relations Commissioner
PO Box 6751
Victoria Street
Auckland

Dear Dr Foon,

LETTER OF COMPLAINT – CAPITAL AND COAST DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD

1. This is a formal letter of complaint from the *New Zealand Taxpayers' Union* regarding the recent Capital and Coast District Health Board's decision to move Maori and Pacific patients to the front of their elective surgery waiting list.
2. The District Health Board's decision to use ethnicity to determine who goes to the head of the line is demonstrably racist and deserves the strongest condemnation.
3. We say that taxpayer-funded health resources should be allocated solely on clinical need in all instances, not racial preference. But even if we are wrong, elective surgery waiting lists are not like primary health care, where race is sometimes used as a cheap proxy for need. For elective surgery precise clinical data is available to determine the need. The arguments that a particular race has higher or lower (on average) need is invalid.
4. Patients are already assessed on clinical need and should be treated on this basis alone. Being the "wrong" race should not push patients down the elective surgery list.
5. To be honest, we did not expect to have to make this complaint given the recent publicity. We expected you, as Race Relations Commissioner, to proactively address this life and death issue. Instead, it does not even get mentioned on your Facebook page.
6. When you took up the role of Race Relations Commissioner in August last year, one of your first comments was that 'silence did not solve things – it was important to speak up and speak out on matters of race relations.'

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7. That is why the *Taxpayers' Union* is disappointed that you have chosen to not speak up and speak out on this issue.
8. You have raised the issue of racism in health several times. In February 2020 you warned that structural organisations such as District Health Boards “do have an unconscious bias and a little bit of racism and discrimination too.” You were prepared to publicly call on the Ministry of Health to provide answers regarding lower COVID-19 testing rates for Asian communities.
9. So we are surprised this issue escaped your attention. You have had time on Facebook to mark the 42nd anniversary of the Bastion Point evictions, call for the New Zealand Wars to be marked by a new public holiday, and acknowledge Rotuman Language Week.
10. Last week you were on Radio New Zealand commenting on a café asking their staff from various countries to communicate in English when working, and calling for a school to apologise for a student posting a photo in Snapchat while at home during lockdown.
11. The Capital and Coast District Health Board’s policy is a critical race relations issue and you should bring the full force of your position against it immediately.
12. We look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,
New Zealand Taxpayers' Union Inc.



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