



28 November 2022 MEDIA RELEASE

Funding to address pay parity for hospice staff a significant step

Te Kahu Pairuri o Aotearoa - Hospice New Zealand was very pleased to hear the Minister of Health's announcement about funding to increase pay for frontline community health workers including hospice staff.

Over the past few years, hospices, along with many primary and community health care providers, have fallen behind on pay rates when compared to Te Whatu Ora - Health New Zealand employees. Hospice nursing staff pay, for example, may be as much as 19% to 22% less than a similarly experienced nurse employed by Te Whatu Ora. This has created a situation where hospices have been losing staff to better paid positions in Te Whatu Ora services and struggling to recruit staff to fill vacancies.

This is due in part to the significant pay increases achieved in the public sector, including pay equity agreements, but also because of the chronic underfunding of

Some hospices have been able to match Te Whatu Ora rates for nurses in an effort to attract staff, but this has required the use of reserves and is creating additional financial strain on a sector that is already underfunded and has a high reliance on community giving.

“This will be a significant boost for hospices that are struggling to recruit and retain the highly skilled staff they need to deliver high quality palliative care. Says Hospice New Zealand CEO Wayne Naylor. “There is a lot of detail yet to be worked out about how the funding will be allocated and distributed to hospices, and which staff groups will be included. While this is an important step in the right direction, funding to improve staff pay is just one piece of the puzzle to achieve sustainable hospice funding.”

In 2021, hospices had to raise over \$87 million to fund the gap between government funding of \$88m and the total cost of delivering services to around 19,000 people and their whānau.

“We want to keep hospice care free and see it made more widely available, but not at the expense of the communities hospices are there to serve. This vital health service needs continued focus from government and Te Whatu Ora who need to recognise that ensuring people can die well is just as important as helping them live well.”

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