

SECURING NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE



**BUDGET
2026**

Hon Simeon Brown Minister of Health

28 May 2026

Record health funding with patients at the centre

The Government is fixing the basics and building the future of New Zealand's healthcare system, focused on delivering for patients and supported by record investment in health, Health Minister Simeon Brown says.

"We are focused on improving access to healthcare, reducing wait times, strengthening frontline health services, and delivering against our health targets, so New Zealanders can get the care they need, when they need it," Mr Brown says."

Budget 2026 provides more than \$5.8 billion in new Vote Health operating funding across the forecast period, including a \$1.37 billion annual uplift to help meet frontline cost pressures and support growing demand across the health system.

"This investment will bring total health spending to \$34.2 billion in the 2026/27 financial year and will help Health New Zealand deliver more care for patients, build capacity across frontline services, and continue improving performance against the Government's health targets.

"Our record health investment is already delivering results, with more elective surgeries being completed, higher childhood immunisation rates, and shorter waits in emergency departments. Budget 2026 builds on that progress to ensure even more New Zealanders can access timely, quality healthcare."

Funding provided through Budget 2026 will support increased care delivery in 2026/27, including for:

- 24,000 additional planned care treatments
- 24,000 additional cancer treatments
- 42,000 additional people receiving inpatient care
- 26,000 additional events in emergency departments
- 53,000 additional general practice enrolments
- 272,000 additional bed nights in the residential aged care sector

“This funding uplift will also continue to support access to mental health and addiction services, including increased funding for specialist maternal mental health services to better support women and families.”

Budget 2026 also includes a range of targeted initiatives to improve access to essential health services and strengthen care for communities across New Zealand, including:

- Establishing a nationally coordinated specialist paediatric palliative care service, improving access to care for children and their whānau across the country
- Lowering the eligibility age for the National Bowel Screening Programme to 56, supporting earlier detection of bowel cancer
- Funding to give mothers the option of staying up to three days at a hospital or primary maternity unit after birth
- Strengthening digital health services to improve the security of patient information and protect the system from cyber threats, alongside Health New Zealand investments through the Health Digital Investment Plan
- Investing in high-priority road ambulance initiatives to improve capacity and response times in areas of high demand
- Support for Pharmac to respond to pressures and increase access to medicines
- An increase in mileage rates for home and community support workers, providing critical fuel relief in response to impacts from the Middle East conflict.

“Budget 2026 reflects the Government’s continued focus on fixing the basics and building the future of our healthcare system with patients at the centre.

“This funding will help ensure more New Zealanders can access timely, quality care closer to home, while supporting a stronger and more sustainable health system for the future. By investing in frontline services, hospital infrastructure, digital systems, and workforce support, we are continuing to build a healthcare system New Zealanders can rely on,” Mr Brown says.

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Note to editors:

- From 1 July 2026, Health New Zealand will no longer be required to pay a capital charge to the Crown, and therefore no funding has been provided for this purpose in 2026/27. This technical change will have no impact on overall funding for service delivery, infrastructure, or patient care. This means:
 - No impact from this change on patients or the care they get from Health New Zealand or other health services
 - Net neutral impact on Health New Zealand from this technical change
 - Minor Health New Zealand efficiency gains by removing capital charge-related admin.