

ADDRESSING THE NEW ZEALAND CANCER BURDEN

A CRITICAL ELECTION ISSUE

The World Cancer Declaration calls upon Government leaders to significantly reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity, and integrate cancer control into the world health and development agenda. The primary goals of this declaration are (a) major reductions in premature deaths from cancer and (b) improvements in quality of life and cancer survival rates.

This year alone, over 20,000 New Zealanders will be diagnosed with cancer. The survival and the quality of life for each man, woman, and child diagnosed with cancer depends on the successful implementation of sound evidence-based health policy. It is acknowledged that not every cancer is preventable or curable, therefore universal access to palliative care in a range of settings is essential.

The next New Zealand Government has the opportunity to make a profound impact on cancer incidence and outcomes in New Zealand – not just over the next three years, but well into the future.

An ageing population means the incidence of cancer will grow exponentially, especially as the over 65s is the group with the highest rate of cancer requiring treatment.

New Zealand needs to improve rates of early diagnosis, equitable access to care, and the reduction of inequalities for Maori. It has been estimated that one third of cancer deaths in New Zealand could be prevented.

CANGO, an alliance of eight major New Zealand cancer NGOs, calls on the next New Zealand Government to answer the World Cancer Declaration's call to action to:

1. Reduce modifiable risk factors for cancer
2. Achieve equity for all New Zealanders across the cancer care continuum
3. Prioritise rollout of the national bowel cancer screening programme
4. Develop, publish and report on a robust cancer workforce plan
5. Improve data to ensure effective management and planning of cancer services
6. Increase access and investment in clinical trials and research as part of the cancer treatment paradigm
7. Address the palliative care needs of an aging population

CANGO (Cancer Non-Governmental Organisations) is an alliance of eight prominent New Zealand cancer charities – Beat Bowel Cancer Aotearoa, New Zealand Breast Cancer Foundation, Cancer Society of New Zealand, New Zealand Gynaecological Cancer Foundation, Hospice New Zealand, Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand, Melanoma Foundation of New Zealand and Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand.

The group was formed in 2007 with the aim of increasing collaboration among cancer charities. Chief Executives of member organisations meet regularly to discuss key issues facing the sector; to meet and share information with representatives from the Ministry of Health, Cancer Control New Zealand, and others working in cancer-related areas; and to work together on specific initiatives that reflect the shared goal of all members to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer for New Zealanders.

1. REDUCE MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS FOR CANCER

Intensifying efforts to **reduce exposure to known cancer and common Non Communicable Disease (NCD) risks is**

possible if we have an environment where healthy public policy and regulation enables a growing number of New Zealanders to demonstrate cancer risk-reducing behaviours: This will be achieved if we can:

- accelerate legislation to support the goal of a **Smokefree Aotearoa** by 2025
- engage all stakeholders to increase the proportion of people eating a **healthy and balanced diet**
- implement the WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol
- develop and implement sustainable policies and actions that **promote physical activity**.

To address modifiable risks we also need to:

- develop and implement culturally appropriate policies that create and encourage healthy environments and informed choices
- develop and implement measures to reduce New Zealanders' exposure to environmental and occupational carcinogens such as UV radiation (environmental) and asbestos (occupational).

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to prioritise and implement effective legislation and programmes to reduce modifiable risk factors for cancer.

2. ACHIEVE EQUITY FOR ALL NEW ZEALANDERS ACROSS THE CANCER CARE CONTINUUM

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act says *"No one shall be deprived of life except on such grounds as are established by law and are consistent with the principles of fundamental justice"*. CANGO considers equitable health care is a fundamental human right. Despite improvements in cancer survival rates we still have groups in New Zealand that disproportionately appear in cancer incidence, mortality and late stage of diagnosis rates.

The reasons for such disparities are multiple and complex. For example, for Maori, co-morbidity factors (such as diabetes and heart disease), medical workforce diversity issues, limited access to cultural competence training, a continued physical rather than holistic approach to 'health', and socio-economic effects, can all have an impact on outcomes. For rural communities, access to preventative services and screening, specialist and multidisciplinary care as well as travel considerations and limited training opportunities for rural professionals can all make a big difference to a patient's cancer experience and outcome.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to prioritise and act to achieve equity for ALL New Zealanders across the cancer care continuum irrespective of ethnicity, location, and age.

3. PRIORITISE ROLLOUT OF A NATIONAL BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMME

Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in New Zealand affecting both men and women. Each year, almost 3,000 New Zealanders are newly diagnosed.

Currently, New Zealanders diagnosed with bowel cancer have only a 55% chance of surviving more than five years. CANGO believes that outcomes can be improved, conservatively, to a 75% chance with improved screening and treatment, as well as heightened public awareness of symptoms and the importance of early diagnosis. When there are delays in diagnosis chances of survival are reduced.

CANGO supports the current commitment to developing a national screening programme but is concerned that the rollout is too slow. We need action to ensure that the workforce are trained and ready to implement the screening programme across the country at the time of planned rollout in 2015.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to ensure the bowel cancer screening pilot is completed to the deadline of late 2015 and to prioritise addressing workforce issues likely to affect the urgent rollout of a national bowel screening programme.

4. DEVELOP, PUBLISH AND REPORT ON A ROBUST CANCER WORKFORCE PLAN

There has been a significant amount of resource reallocation occurring as part of the current Government's Faster Cancer Treatment programme. The next Government must develop and prioritise a comprehensive multidisciplinary plan to ensure there is:

- adequate skilled workforce for rollout of the bowel cancer screening programme
- access to training in Medical physics and retention strategies to prevent attrition
- an appropriately trained medical oncology workforce
- adequate infrastructure to successfully implement the National Tumour Standards.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to develop, publish and report on a plan for a sustainable, appropriately trained, multi-disciplinary cancer workforce.

5. IMPROVE DATA TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING OF CANCER SERVICES

Complete and accurate cancer data is an essential prerequisite for complying with New Zealand's Faster Cancer Treatment Indicators and the recently published Standards of Service Provision. To maximise its usefulness, the data needs to be of sufficient depth for effective analysis and application (e.g. for audit, to ensure equity of care, and to enable high quality service management and planning).

CANGO acknowledges the significant work undertaken to improve the cancer register for statistical data collection. CANGO asks that further collection of quality clinical data is planned and future-proofed to include genomic data (the key to future targeted treatments) across all cancer streams and that registries enable a model of care for cancer management.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to invest in enhanced and connected 'clinical' cancer registries and IT systems that will allow high-quality management and planning of cancer services.

This year alone, over 20,000 New Zealanders will be diagnosed with cancer.

6. INCREASE ACCESS AND INVESTMENT IN CLINICAL TRIALS AND RESEARCH AS PART OF THE CANCER TREATMENT PARADIGM

Clinical trials are a key part of cancer treatment. They deliver recognised benefits and outcomes at all levels for cancer patients as well as national benefits to the country, including:

- answering important questions that drive improvements in patient care and outcomes, from prevention and screening through to therapy and support
- enabling more informed decisions around drug funding
- supporting an effective long-term strategy.

We need investment in, and more access to, clinical trials within the New Zealand environment. Patients need access to clinical trials across the country without disadvantaging those from smaller or rural areas.

CANGO believes a future Government could require each DHB to report on what access they provide patients to trials, as well as ensuring consumer involvement as a base requirement to any clinical trial development.

To achieve these benefits requires increased investment, both to expand the number of trials undertaken and to facilitate equitable access for patients to participate.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to support increased access and investment in clinical trials by DHBs and the allocation of a larger proportion of HRC funding to cancer-related research.

7. ADDRESS THE PALLIATIVE CARE NEEDS OF AN AGING POPULATION

As the New Zealand population ages and cancer incidence increases, Palliative and End of Life care becomes more important. Therefore Palliative and End of Life Care must be available in all settings. To do this will require continued investment in resourcing, training and education for the health workforce to ensure all new Zealanders get the care they need in the setting of their choice.

CALL TO ACTION:

CANGO calls on the next New Zealand Government to ensure an appropriate investment in Palliative and End of Life Care to meet the needs of the population.

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