



14/12/2023
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

To the Hon Christopher Luxon, Hon Dr Shane Reti & Hon Tama Potaka

Re: The Dissolution of Te Aka Whai Ora

Empowering tangata whenua is a key part of achieving true health equity in Aotearoa New Zealand, and this change is being actively accomplished by Te Aka Whai Ora. Under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we as a health system have an obligation to address the needs of Māori, a task that is central to Te Aka Whai Ora's role. As the elected voices of this nation's future doctors we oppose the dissolution of this historic institution, and implore the government to demonstrate their commitment to Māori health leadership.

The achievements of Te Aka Whai Ora in its short time as an organisation cannot be understated. They include projects such as Hāpaitia and Ki te Whaiao which have provided much needed attention and support in the space of Māori Mental Health, funding for Kahu Taurima and Ngā Manukura: Clinical Leadership seeking to address disparities in maternal and infant health, and huge strides in advancing relations between our health system and local iwi to target at need communities.

This amazing work is but a fraction of all that has been done by the dedicated staff of Te Aka Whai Ora. The reason for Te Aka Whai Ora's establishment was to give Māori a platform to achieve equal health outcomes, and its removal actively obstructs this goal.

As future doctors we are extremely conscious of the continued ways our health system is failing Māori. Through systemic oppression and the unequal distribution in the social determinants of health, the life expectancy for Māori remains significantly less than that of Non-Māori, and Māori experience worse health outcomes across almost all areas of health. As the future of medicine in this country we all hope our individual practice will contribute to improving these outcomes, however to make meaningful change we need strong organisational leadership in this area, by Māori, for Māori.

We recognise that much has been said on this issue during the election campaign as well as since then, however we would like to highlight that your government ran on a campaign of change. Too often we see leaders fail in their key task of providing guidance that is based on expert opinion and not the loudest voices. As the country's new leaders, the health of our indigenous people is your responsibility. We implore you to be the change you campaigned on, and show true leadership by doing what health experts across the country are imploring you to do. We call on you to commit to preserving Māori leadership in our health system, and ensuring that your current and future health reform actively improves Māori health.

Yours sincerely,

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