

## **PHA endorses preventative health approach**

The Public Health Association (PHA) is welcoming the preventative health approach set out today by the Green Party.

National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating says the PHA has always supported tackling the causes of illness, and preventing people from becoming sick in the first place.

“This policy is from the Greens, but we encourage all political parties to prioritise keeping people well. A big portion of the health budget goes on illnesses that are largely preventable. These include tobacco- and alcohol-related illnesses and type 2 diabetes.

“It’s a cliché, but the fence at the top of the cliff is always better than the ambulance at the bottom.”

Dr Keating says that about one-in-five hospital beds is taken up with someone whose illness could have been prevented.

“Every preventable admission means that someone else goes further down the waiting list.”

She says child poverty also has a big impact on health.

“A child growing up in New Zealand in poverty is three times as likely to be sick as a child growing up in a higher-income household. These children are still attacked by old-fashioned diseases such as tuberculosis, meningococcal disease, rheumatic fever, gastroenteritis, bronchiectasis and pneumonia. They get these illnesses because so many of them have inadequate nutritious food, live in cold damp houses, and where poor transport makes it difficult to get to health services.

“We urge all political parties to focus on keeping people healthy and preventing illness. An investment now, in health and in our children, will be repaid ten-fold in the future.”

### **For more information contact:**

Dr Gay Keating  
National Executive Officer  
Public Health Association  
027 3414 708