

**Government's private hospital plan misses the point
– Public Health Association**

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The Public Health Association (PHA) says the Government's plans for District Health Boards (DHBs) to work more closely with private hospitals misses the point.

National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating says the most effective way to reduce waiting lists is to stop people getting so sick that they need hospitals in the first place.

"Encouraging DHBs to enter into longer-term arrangements with private hospitals isn't dealing with the real issue. What we need to be doing is keeping people healthy, by sorting out little health problems before they become big problems.

"A lot of the health budget goes on illnesses that are largely preventable. These include infections, tobacco-related illnesses and type 2 diabetes.

"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."

Dr Keating says we need to make the best use of tax payers' money, even more so during a recession.

"And by far the best use of money is on prevention. We need to keep people out of hospital by ensuring everyone is connected with their family doctor, who they see whenever they need to, and who will remind them when they need a wellness check.

"We need to ensure there continues to be funding for quit smoking support and advice, immunisations, screening for illnesses like breast and cervical cancer, sun safety information, and information that encourages healthy food choices and physical activity."

For further information

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