

Ensure a strong focus on prevention of illness, say public health clinical leaders

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Ensuring a strong focal point for prevention of illness is essential if the Minister's reforms are to be effective say three leading public health organisations. The Minister of Health today announced structural changes in the health sector aimed at improving the quality and performance of the New Zealand health system.

Speaking for Hauora.com, the Health Promotion Forum of NZ, and the Public Health Association of New Zealand, Grant Berghan said that a clear single point of accountability is needed for public health services to achieve the Minister's goal of greater coordination and stronger, better planned decisions.

"The decisions announced today give very little attention to public health. To reduce fragmentation and improve productivity in preventive services we need a long-term framework that lays out what should be provided at different levels – national, regional, local.

"This then needs to flow into good planning and funding for services and future capacity. These are the functions outlined for the National Health Board, along with sector performance monitoring."

The three organisations say that public health within the National Health Board will need a critical mass of high-level skills, and should have a Chief Public Health Officer and a Chief Māori Public Health Officer.

"Effective and efficient health services have a focus on helping keep people well in the first place, and this provides an essential foundation for a strong economy," Mr Berghan said.

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