

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION MEDIA RELEASE

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Want to save some money? Get out and vote in local elections!

As the first of the voting packs for the local body elections go out, the Public Health Association (PHA) is urging New Zealanders to cast a ballot in the local government and district health board elections.

"District Health Boards (DHBs) control more than \$10 billion of taxpayers' money each year. That's a lot of our hard-earned cash in the hands of the mere 140 New Zealanders who are elected to serve on them. So who wouldn't want a say in who those people are?" asks the PHA's National Executive Officer Dr Gay Keating.

Dr Keating says DHBs, which are always struggling for money, should see the prevention of ill health and injury as better value for money than building bigger hospitals.

"Letting someone get so sick that they end up in hospital costs more than treating them in the community before their conditions worsen. Heading off ill health means vaccination programmes, blood pressure checks for over-40s, keeping an eye on people with diabetes and cardiovascular disease, helping smokers quit, and encouraging the overweight and sedentary to start exercising."

Dr Keating says public health is affected by what councils do on more levels than most people realise, and cites urban design as an example.

"Badly designed cities and towns damage health because people need to use their cars instead of walking or cycling. This means more pollution, more obesity and respiratory and heart disease. It means more traffic injuries, higher carbon emissions and negative impacts on health.

"Local elections might lack the excitement of general elections but they are a chance for voters to save some money as taxpayers by casting a ballot for the candidate who talks about prevention instead of more hospital beds."

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