



**TOI TE ORA**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
*Bay of Plenty + Lakes Districts*

**Medical Officer of Health Report**  
**August 2019**

## **Measuring and Improving Health**

The 2019 budget was branded as New Zealand's first wellbeing budget. It was based on several years of preparatory Living Standards work completed by the Treasury. As many of the things that make a difference to health outcomes lay outside of the health sector this shift in emphasis is hugely significant for DHBs. Concurrently, the Government has also signalled its intention to make fundamental changes to the public sector, including the appointment of regional leaders to convene decision making across government agencies.

Each of these initiatives builds on the public health strategies of Health in All Policies, addressing the wider determinants of health, and working upstream to prevent problems.

In its Living Standards Framework (LSF) Treasury emphasises the importance of achieving higher living standards for all New Zealanders and goes on to say that just using economic and financial measures misses some important aspects of what constitutes wellbeing. Treasury's analysis concludes that we need to grow the country's human, social, natural and financial/physical capitals in order to build economic capital and improve wellbeing. The intention of the LSF is to align the public finance system with an intergenerational wellbeing approach.

On the Treasury website is the start of a LSF dashboard to help assess indicators of wellbeing and progress with improving them. More work will be required to better represent Te Ao Māori perspectives and key aspects such as children's wellbeing and New Zealand cultural identity. The four capitals will be used as key indicators of wellbeing, now and into the future, including how, as a society, we use the capitals and any barriers that prevent us from doing so. The capitals are interdependent and work together to support wellbeing. The relevance for the health sector and DHBs is clear. For instance civic engagement is a measure under human capital and includes procedural fairness, cultural identity, health, housing, income, safety and security and social connections. On this basis addressing mental health, child poverty and domestic violence have been made priorities.

Assessing progress against the LSF will include comparisons with the other 35 countries in the OECD as well as analysis of the distribution of variables, including income and access to services, within New Zealand. The underlying premise of the Wellbeing budget is that economic growth is not the only marker of wellbeing. Growth needs to be sustainable and inclusive, as well as productive with wellbeing defined as when people are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose, balance and meaning.

Impending changes to the State Sector Act 1988 are designed to ensure the public service is unified in tackling issues such as child poverty and mental health. Public service leaders will be expected to take collective responsibility to tackle the country's big challenges.

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