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Committee Secretariat
Governance and Administration Committee
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Wellington

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1. Introduction

The Cancer Society of New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Governance and Administration Committee considering the Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Bill.

The Cancer Society is a non-profit organisation which aims to minimise the incidence and impact of cancer on all those living in New Zealand. We work across the cancer continuum with key work areas that include health promotion, supportive care, provision of information and resources, and funding of research.

Cancer is New Zealand's biggest cause of death, accounting for a third of deaths in 2015¹ and is a leading cause of health loss. The Cancer Society is committed to creating a future with less cancer

Recommendation:

The Cancer Society of New Zealand supports restoring the purpose of local government to be to “promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities”

These four pillars represent the local determinants of health and cannot be ignored if cancer incidence and mortality are to be reduced

2. Summary:

Reducing the incidence of cancer in New Zealand is a key mission of the Cancer Society.

Key modifiable risk factors that reduce cancer risk include: reducing tobacco use, increasing physical activity, controlling weight, a healthy diet, limiting alcohol and avoiding excess sun exposure.¹

Social, economic, environmental and cultural factors play a significant role in cancer incidence and mortality.² Between 30 and 50 % of cancers are preventable and evidence indicates that the environment where we live, work and play has a huge impact on the risks of developing cancer.³ Local government in its role of creating and maintaining supportive environments, developing policies and providing services has an important part to play in promoting health and wellbeing in our communities, helping to reduce the risks associated with cancer mortality and morbidity (e.g. tobacco and alcohol control policies, physical activity facilities, sun shade and increasingly healthy eating/drinking policies and practice). There is overwhelming evidence that positive community-wide policies and practice can significantly reduce the cancer burden, but it is necessary to continue to invest in such actions. ^{4,5}

Restoring the purpose of local government to encompass the ‘four well-beings’ recognises that council decisions have an immense impact on our health and well-being and acknowledges that most factors that impact on our health are outside the health sector. This recognition will support councils to consider the wider impact of their decisions and promote a joined-up approach with other sectors to tackle the social, environmental, and cultural determinants of health. Working collectively to improve the well-being of New Zealanders is a key strength of local government practice across NZ. The Cancer Society believes this should be supported and efforts accelerated as we face a growing non-communicable disease crisis in NZ.

3. The burden of cancer on New Zealand is significant and growing

Most New Zealanders will have some experience of cancer, either personally or through a relative or friend. According to recent statistics from the Ministry of Health, cancer continues to be New Zealand’s biggest killer, with 23,149 new cases of cancer registered in 2015 and 9816 deaths due to cancer⁶. In comparison with other causes of death, cancer related deaths represent almost one third deaths (approximately 31%). Moreover, cancer is a leading cause of sickness and disability in New Zealand.⁷

The Cancer burden is not shared equally. Māori suffer from greater levels of premature cancer mortality than the general population due to disproportionate levels of deprivation and accumulated disadvantage throughout the cancer care pathway, including late diagnosis, poorer access and quality of cancer care and greater delays to treatment.⁸

In 2015, according to the Ministry of Health, Māori had a cancer registration rate of 420.2 per 100,000 Māori population, which was significantly higher than the rate for non-Māori (322.2 per 100,000 non-Māori population).

Māori had a cancer mortality rate of 200.7 per 100,000 Māori population in comparison to the rate of 115.3 per 100,000 non-Māori population.

As we seek to re-dress cancer inequities and as the population ages and more people are diagnosed with cancer earlier, there is increasing demand on services to support that population. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer projections, New Zealand is expected to register approximately 34,000 new cancer cases and over 15,000 cancer related deaths in 2035⁹.

4. What is health and wellbeing?

The World Health Organisation defines health as:

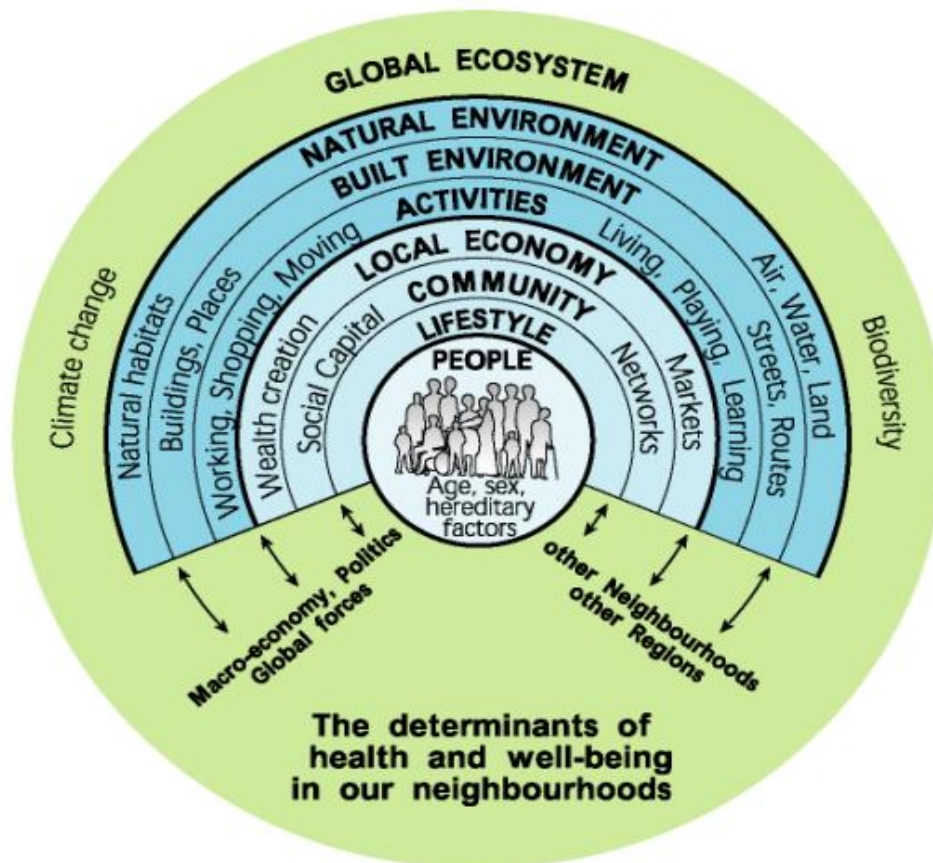
“.. a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”¹⁰.

Promoting health is reliant on a complex interaction of factors. Whilst every individual is born with genetic factors that may predispose or protect from disease, social, economic, cultural and environment factors are pivotal to any consideration on life course and community health.

Maori thinking toward health further strengthens the concepts of wider determinants of health and wellbeing, placing emphasis not only on physical health *taha tinana* but also spiritual *health taha wairua*. Both these require a sense of belonging and caring *taha whanau* and recognition of mental wellbeing *tata hinegaro* to provide an understanding of what health means¹¹.

The wider determinants of health and well-being are presented below (Fig 1).

Figure 1: determinants of health and well-being in our neighbourhoods [Barton and Grant 2006]



Evidence shows that those living in strong safe communities, with access to decent housing, educational and employment opportunities, able to participate in local decision making have better health outcomes^{12, 13} Models of Maori health such as Te Pae Mahutonga illustrate this⁹



The health disparities seen within New Zealand are based largely on absence or inadequacy of these factors¹⁴. Addressing these factors in health requires the organised efforts of society to reduce inequity¹⁵

5.Improving the health and well-being of our communities

From its inception in the 19th Century local government has played a key role in population health with responsibility for sanitation and safe drinking water. The 1956 Health Act makes clear this role was maintained:

“it shall be the duty of every local authority to improve, promote and protect public health within its district”¹⁶

Local government is “place shaping” - using its statutory powers to create, manage and promote communities that aim to meet the needs of their residents¹⁷.

Health and wellbeing is a resource for everyday life¹⁴ and the Cancer Society believes that that the fundamental role that local councils play in creating policies that impact on health cannot be ignored¹⁸ Specifically, by promoting communities that are strong, safe, inclusive

and reflect the needs of residents, local councils help address those social, economic, environmental factors that contribute to cancer incidence and mortality.

By fulfilling their statutory duties local government cannot be separated from promoting health and wellbeing. In 2013, the Cancer Society along with others in the New Zealand public health sector opposed the removal of the four wellbeing's - arguing the integral role local government plays in the health and well-being of communities. Restoration of these concepts will affirm the many partnerships that the Cancer Society has forged with district authorities across New Zealand - evidence that health cannot be separated from community development.

We applaud the work local government has done to promote health in recent years, however restoration of the 4 well-beings will provide the mandate required to ensure this key role is developed further. In the absence of this clear mandate, there is the risk that focus rests on council's responsibilities for the provision of infrastructure and regulatory matters and ignores the immense role that councils play in preventing cancer incidence in our communities, particularly through tobacco control and physical activity policy and practice.

Examination of strategic planning frameworks from a selection of local councils illustrate how the significance of "place shaping" and relationship to cancer prevention. Restoration of the 4 well-beings provides the framework required in which such roles can become more widely embraced:

I. Toward a Smokefree Nation - Auckland Plan 2050¹⁹

"A smokefree city is part of the Auckland Plan. It aligns with the government's goal of becoming a smokefree nation by 2025"

"Smokefree Policy is aimed at improving the health and well-being of Auckland's communities by reducing the prevalence of smoking and de-normalising smoking behaviour"

Tobacco use continues to decline overall but prevalence remains high amongst priority groups and remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death in NZ. Smoking continues to kill around 5000 New Zealanders each year due to smoking related diseases and exposure to second-hand smoke²⁰.

II. The benefits of physical activity to health - Tauranga City Council²¹

"Physical activity and sport are major contributors to personal health and wellbeing. There are a wide range of health benefits attributable to participation in sport and physical activity. These include...reducing risk of heart disease and stroke..., obesity and diabetes; helping to prevent cancers... contributing to good mental health and enhancing overall wellbeing"

New Zealanders are increasingly leading sedentary lifestyles - inactivity can increase the risk of certain cancers. Regular physical activity can reduce the chances of dying prematurely from cancer and many other diseases. 22

III. Protecting against the risks of excessive solar radiation - Whanganui District Council²³

“The Council acknowledges that local government has an important role in minimising exposure to UV radiation and can play a significant role in reducing the burden of skin damage from exposure to UVR and act to prevent it. Maximum protection from solar UVR can best be achieved through a combination of personal and environmental strategies, primarily shade”

New Zealand has the world’s highest rates of melanoma skin cancer in the world and incidence is rising. Skin cancer risk can be reduced through shade protection, personal sun protective measures and a number of other strategies.²⁴

IV. Active transport options - Hutt City Council²⁵

Hutt City’s ‘Urban Growth Strategy’ emphasises development and “active forms of travel” (inactivity increases the risk of many cancers):

“intensification, that provides a high-quality environment, including reducing journey distances and giving people more travel choices. Integral to the changing shape of our city will be achieving a balanced transport system and encouraging people to choose active forms of travel”

V. Promoting responsible attitudes to alcohol - Ashburton District Council²⁶

“A Local Alcohol Policy has the potential to reduce alcohol-related harm, including crime, disorderly behaviour, damage and injuries through reducing the accessibility and availability of alcohol”

Nearly a third of all alcohol-related deaths in NZ are due to cancer. Effective control interventions and reforms have and will continue to reduce this burden if prioritised.²⁷

Strengthening economic development - Dunedin City Council²⁸

“We want a resilient city with a strong economy, efficient infrastructure that connects the city and its residents, supportive and healthy communities, a great natural and built environment, a vibrant creative and cultural scene, and a wealth of recreation opportunities”

Social isolation is a risk factor for multiple diseases, including cancer and can worsen cancer outcomes and survival. In contrast, social connectedness can promote resilience and may lower cancer mortality rates.²⁹

6. Healthy public policy - partnerships for the future

The Cancer Society sees its partnership with local government as critical to its aim of minimising the impact of cancer on communities. The causes of ill health are often social,

economic and environmental and the patterns of mortality and morbidity show considerable disparity between population groups, whether analysed by social economic status, ethnicity or simply location. Improving population health calls for greater collaboration between communities, health agencies, iwi and the government sector, especially local government.

Increasingly local government planning is reflecting this collaboration by adopting a Health in All Policies approach to its work^{30 31 32} - incorporating health considerations into the decision-making process.

Restoration of the four well beings as the purpose of local government will underpin this process and staff within the Cancer Society across New Zealand look forward to working with their local authorities further in the future

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Kernaghan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mike Kernaghan Chief Executive

Cancer Society of New Zealand

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