



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

## United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Item 7 (Indigenous peoples and pandemics)

### **New Zealand written statement for UN Journal**

Delivered by Tamati Olsen  
Director (Acting), Wellbeing, Policy Partnerships  
Te Puni Kōkiri – New Zealand Ministry of Māori Development

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## **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

Twentieth Session – 19-30 April 2021

### **New Zealand government written statement on item 7: Future work of the Permanent Forum, including issues considered by the Economic and Social Council and emerging issues, specifically challenges related to pandemics and responses to them**

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It has been acknowledged that Māori, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, are likely to be most adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to existing health inequities and socio-economic factors such as lower income, poorer housing, and higher rates of long-term conditions and other co-morbidities.

The New Zealand Government, iwi (tribes) and Māori organisations are respectively each aware that the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, including challenges to accessing public services, will persist for a long time and are preparing to support indigenous communities in the long-term.

#### *Pandemic response*

In March 2020, the New Zealand Government released \$56.5 million for a Māori-specific response action plan, including \$30 million for Māori health services, and \$15 million to Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies to support vulnerable whānau (Māori families). Whānau Ora is a community-based indigenous health model, providing healthcare services to Māori in a way that is consistent with Māori values.

The COVID-19 Māori Response Action Plan was developed to ensure the health and wellbeing of Māori communities is protected during the COVID-19 pandemic. This Plan sets out a strategic approach and includes actions

to address issues of access to public services. This includes \$8 million given to Māori health providers to establish outreach services, with an additional \$10 million allocated specifically to outreach influenza vaccination services.

### *Whānau Ora*

The Plan also includes a suite of cross-sector actions aimed at creating alignment between government agencies to enable a more effective and holistic approach to supporting whānau wellbeing. This included providing resource directly to Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies, as they have strong networks and links directly into Māori communities.

\$15 million of funding was provided to Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies to support whānau and Māori communities throughout New Zealand. The fund provided communities with the means to meet the needs of whānau impacted by COVID-19, including care packages, access to food, hygiene and sanitation packs, essential supplies, warm clothing and access to quality health information.

### *Other work to address COVID-19 and inequities in the health sector*

The Ministry of Health initiated the Psychosocial Response and Recovery Plan. This plan acknowledges the impacts of COVID-19 on the social and cultural aspects of mental wellbeing. The Ministry of Health has collaborated with partner organisations to address social needs, including for young people. This includes an action to apply an equity lens when developing policies that impact on mental wellbeing for population groups, including Māori. The principles of the Plan include *Equity for all*, which will be demonstrated by addressing institutional racism and discrimination in policy design and services.

Released in July 2020, Whakamaua: Māori Health Action Plan 2020-2025 responds directly to challenges in Māori health and wellbeing and sets a clear course for Māori health development over the next five years. Whakamaua includes an action to manage the protection of Māori health through the COVID-19 Ministry work programme. An additional action focuses on supporting the cross-government COVID-19 response to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on Māori communities.

Without continued Government intervention and iwi and Māori community leadership, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 are likely to further exacerbate existing inequities, particularly in relation to access to public services. The ongoing pandemic response is an opportunity for the New Zealand Government to strengthen its relationship with Māori to address long-term health, economic and social inequities.