

Ministry for the Environment

Survey on People and place – Ensuring the wellbeing of every generation

20 May 2022

For more information please contact:
Jane Murray
NMDHB Public Health Service
Email: jane.murray@nmdhb.govt.nz
Phone: (022) 102 9798

Submitter details

1. Nelson Marlborough Health (Nelson Marlborough District Health Board) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH appreciates the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Ministry for the Environment's Survey on People and place – Ensuring the wellbeing of every generation
2. NMH makes this submission in recognition of its responsibilities to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.
3. This submission sets out particular matters of interest and concern to NMH.

Specific Comments

The importance of land in your everyday life today

Q1. How important, or not, is the land in supporting the following aspects of your wellbeing?

- A. My physical wellbeing (for example, being outdoors for physical exercise or*
- B. sports)*
- C. My mental wellbeing (for example, as a place to recharge or relax)*
- D. My cultural wellbeing (for example, retaining links to ancestors or traditional practices)*
- E. My spiritual wellbeing (for example, meditation or worshipping in nature)*
- F. My social wellbeing (for example, going for a walk with others, picnicking)*
- G. My material wellbeing (for example, relying on the land to generate income or grow food for my family)*

SCALE:

- 1. Not at all important;*
- 2. Not very important*
- 3. Fairly important*
- 4. Very important*
- 5. Extremely important*
- 6. Prefer not to say*

NMH would agree that all aspects of wellbeing are extremely important. The health and wellbeing of humans cannot be separated from the health and wellbeing of the environment. If the land around us is unhealthy e.g. the soil is degraded, the air polluted, the water contaminated, habitats are damaged or species extinct, this will have an effect on human health. In addition to this,

the conditions in which people live are impacted by a range of environmental, social and behavioural factors which are referred to as the 'social determinants of health'. The diagram below shows how the determinants are complex and interlinked. Income, employment, education and housing have considerable impacts on our health; much more than the delivery of health services. The level of educational achievement directly affects health outcomes. People who are socially and economically advantaged have better health outcomes than those living in poverty. These situations describe health inequity. Inequity is about unfair and avoidable differences between groups. Wellbeing is determined by the interplay of the factors shown below.



Q2. What do you think is the most important change that today's generations of New Zealanders should make to how we care for the land, as stewards for the environment?

NMH sees the most important change that New Zealanders could make would be adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 goals capture improvements to the natural environment, climate action, reducing inequalities, an emphasis on sustainability alongside a focus on wellbeing with a reduction in poverty and hunger.¹

¹ [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/)

This includes commitments to clean water and sanitation which aligns with the vision of Te Mana o Te Wai as well as commits to the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and halt land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Q2B. What should be the legacy of today's generations?

The legacy of today's generations should be to exceed the sustainable development goals in the shortest time frame possible.

Q3. How important, or not, is it to you that the Briefing explores the following land uses and activities, when considering the wellbeing of tomorrow's generations?

- A. To provide spaces to live (for example, land for housing and communities)*
- B. To support work and livelihoods (for example, farming, nature-based tourism, forestry, energy and resource production)*
- C. To grow and gather food and resources for personal use (for example, hunting, foraging, gardening)*
- D. To foster cultural value and a sense of belonging (for example, places of tradition and connection to ancestors, tapu land, historic sites)*
- E. To nurture spiritual connection to places (for example, preserving holy or sacred sites and natural landscapes that generate a sense of awe and wonder)*
- F. To conserve and protect land, biodiversity and species (for example, national parks)*
- G. To provide spaces for play, relaxation and recreation (for example, bush tracks, swimmable beaches, mountain climbing)*
- H. Other (if you consider a land use, activity or connection to place that is not covered above to be very or extremely important, please let us know)*

Scale:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>1. Not at all important</i> | <i>2. Not very important</i> | <i>3. Fairly important</i> |
| <i>4. Very important</i> | <i>5. Extremely important</i> | <i>6. Prefer not to say</i> |

As discussed above, there is interconnectivity between the range of land uses and activities and these will all affect wellbeing. Therefore NMH has identified these as all extremely important.

Q4. *How interested, or not, would you be in knowing more about the following types of case studies?*

- A. *Access to forests and mountains for biking, walking and exploring*
- B. *Forest and bush available to support native plant and bird species*
- C. *Greenspaces, such as parks and community gardens, within towns and cities*
- D. *Housing developments and subdivisions*
- E. *Wetlands, along with the plants and birds they support*
- F. *Local food production, to support households and communities*
- G. *Household waste and the journey to landfill*

Scale:

- 1. *Not at all interested* 2. *Not very interested* 3. *Fairly interested*
- 4. *Very interested* 5. *Extremely interested* 6. *Prefer not to say*

NMH is extremely interested in all the case studies listed above.

Q5. Are there any other case studies, not listed in Q4, that you would find it valuable for the Ministry to look at?

None identified

Q6. *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

Scale:

- 1. *Strongly agree* 2. *Slightly agree* 3. *Neither agree nor disagree*
- 4. *Slightly disagree* 5. *Strongly disagree* 6. *Prefer not to say*

A. *Information: I don't have the right or clear information about what I can do to reduce my environmental impact.*

Slightly agree: Environmental literacy involves having sound scientific information, skills for critical thinking, creative and strategic problem solving and decision making ability.² The degree of environmental literacy for individuals and communities will differ widely especially with the use of social media platforms where it can be difficult to assess the validity of the range

² [What Is Environmental Literacy? | Oregon Environmental Literacy Program \(oregonstate.edu\)](http://oregonstate.edu)

of messages available. Further work needs to be done between government agencies, local councils and NGOs so that people can receive concise messages that can inspire simple actions.

- B. Cost: The cost of more sustainable products and services is too high (for example, organic fruit and vegetables versus conventional foods).*

Strongly agree: Rising daily living costs are putting pressure on households on making choices. This can be seen across many areas such as the price to buy products in plastic vs glass, the investment needed to transport someone to a bulk-bin shop or fruit shop vs the closest supermarket, the cost of petrol cars vs electric cars. Some people can justify the cost but for many other's the extra costs means that people opt for the cheaper, less sustainable option.

- C. Availability: More environmentally sustainable products and services are not readily available where I live or where I go to buy what I need.*

Slightly agree: Those living in smaller centres or rural centres may have fewer options available.

The healthcare sector relies heavily on imported equipment, clinical supplies, and pharmaceuticals. For hygiene purposes, the health sector uses many products which are individually wrapped in plastic, plastic or foil. Sometimes there are very few alternative options available and if options are available, they can be significantly higher cost. For example, expanded polystyrene boxes are used to transport medical supplies that must be kept refrigerated. Alternative reusable packaging may be significantly more expensive.

- D. Technology: Technology and infrastructure to support environmentally sustainable choices are not good enough (for example, public transport or electric-vehicle charging options do not meet my needs).*

Slightly agree: Those living in smaller centres or rural centres may have fewer options available.

- E. Quality: Sustainable or environmentally friendly products and alternatives are not as good as standard products.*

No comment.

- F. Time: I don't have time to be able to focus on the environment.*

Slightly agree: Many environmental articles especially in relation to climate change have focuses on the negative effects. If people receive a lot of

information on threats, people can become fearful and/or guilty³ which can lead to people to disconnect and avoid the topic. Overlay this with concerns about Covid, people may feel less likely to focus on environmental issues.

Q7. Which barrier or set of barriers do you think is most important to address to encourage uptake of environmentally sustainable choices?

The following needs to be considered⁴

1. Inconsistency in leadership
2. Knowledge and information sources
3. Underestimation of risk (especially in relation to climate change)
4. Deny responsibility in contributing to the problem
5. Lack of access to financial capital
6. Lack of enabling policy environment, support mechanisms or infrastructure
7. Fear of change
8. Lack of agency
9. Disinterest in action if it interferes with lifestyle/everyday activities
10. Belief that personal actions is ineffective

What could make a difference?

The recently released Climate Adaptation Plan is an example of a whole of government approach to resolving a significant issue. This same approach could be used by using the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals as the base document to create an Adaptation Plan to address each of the 17 areas relevant to the New Zealand context. This would need to also include a focus on Te Ao Maori and mātauranga Māori.

We would like to hear your ideas about what could make a positive difference to how you draw wellbeing from the land. This information will help inform what the Ministry could look at as part of the Briefing.

Q8. What is likely to inspire you and enable you to reach your aspirations for how the land is cared for?

The recently released Climate Adaptation Plan is an example of a whole of government approach to resolving a significant issue. This same approach could

³ [How to Overcome "Apocalypse Fatigue" Around Climate... \(berkeley.edu\)](#)

⁴ https://mdpi-res.com/d_attachment/sustainability/sustainability-11-04178/article_deploy/sustainability-11-04178.pdf?version=1564737883

be used by using the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals as the base document to create an Adaptation Plan to address each of the 17 areas relevant to the New Zealand context.

Q9. Are there any final comments you would like to share before completing your submission?

No.

Conclusion

NMH thanks the Ministry for the Environment for the opportunity to comment on the Ministry for the Environment's Survey on People and place – Ensuring the wellbeing of every generation

Yours sincerely



Lexie O'Shea
Chief Executive
Lexie.oshea@nmdhb.govt.nz