



Plain Language Bill

Governance and Administration Committee

31 March 2022

For more information please contact:

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Introduction

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 Plain Language Bill.
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 the Public Health Service, NMH.

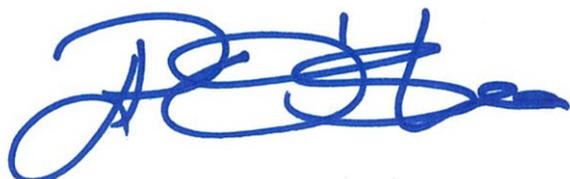
General Comments

4. NMH welcomes the introduction of this Bill that will promote the use of plain English in official documents and websites. As noted in the Explanatory note, comprehensible information from government organisations is a basic democratic right. The use of plain English means that more people will be able to read and understand information provided, this would include younger people, people with lower reading skills and migrants whose first language is not English. Writing in plain English means that there is less chance of written material being misunderstood.
5. NMH supports the establishment of plain language officers for each reporting agency. It is pleasing to see that these officers will be involved in educating agency employees. This is important so that agencies can review their documentation. Consideration could be given to adopting the Flesch-Kincaid readability tests which can be used to indicate how difficult a passage in English is to understand. Scores on the scale range from 0 (Extremely difficult to read) to 1000 (Very easy to read, easily understood by an average 11 year old student). 70-60 Score is the Plain English rating and material can easily be understood by 13-15 year olds students. These tests are already built in function into common word-processing programmes such as Microsoft 365.

Conclusion

6. NMH thanks the Governance and Administration Committee for the opportunity to comment on Plain Language Bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lexie O'Shea', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lexie O'Shea
Chief Executive
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