

Pinnacle Climate Change Position

Introduction

Pinnacle's vision is to deliver equitable primary care that supports all people to thrive by realising their health and wellbeing potential – Kia hauora te katoa, kia puaawai te katoa (Everyone healthy, everyone thriving).

Hauora values many dimensions, including the emotional, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing of whānau and communities. It also reflects the multidimensional nature of identity for Māori, where an individual's health is also intimately and tightly connected to their community and the natural world.

This reality between the connection between communities, the environment and the natural world is conditioned through the principle that all things, animate and inanimate, are related and, therefore, an interdependency between human and the environment contributes to wellbeing.

The ramifications of climate change is an urgent health challenge for Pinnacle and causes a range of impacts on health and wellbeing. The health consequences are serious and harms communities, contributes to socioeconomic burden, and places increased stress on Aotearoa New Zealand's health system.

Impact on our network

We understand that the health impacts on various populations will differ based on their geographic location, socio-economic position, readiness, infrastructure capacity, institutional capabilities, and strategies for local adaptation. Our expansive network covers four unique geographical areas, each expected to confront different degrees and types of climate-related health effects.

Our organisation is dedicated to collaborating with community-centred organisations, Te Whatu Ora, local and other central government bodies, and iwi to create actionable climate change mitigation measures and emergency recovery strategies.

As climate change impacts Aotearoa New Zealand, healthcare strategies need to adapt to infrastructure disruptions, population relocations, and the unique needs of vulnerable groups like Māori, Pasifika communities, children, and senior citizens. Mental health issues and higher suicide rates may rise, especially among rural populations affected by agriculture-dependent adversities.

Future solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change on our network will need to include improved healthcare provider support, telemedicine advancements, and community resilience initiatives. All of these solutions will need to address socio-cultural and health repercussions from displacement.

We must not lose sight of the importance of fostering community resilience and proactive health initiatives in responding to climate change.

Impact on Māori

Within climate change, Māori see the world in a different light to non-indigenous peoples. Climate impacts are felt on the atua (spiritual) level. Te ao Māori (the Māori worldview) is underpinned by interconnectedness to the natural world through whakapapa to Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother).

Pinnacle has the highest number of Māori in its enrolled patient population, and we are committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi while striving to eliminate disparities between Māori and non-Māori individuals. Pinnacle recognises the significant inequalities Māori face in terms of disease prevalence, housing conditions, and economic standing — socioeconomic and ethnic health inequalities are projected to worsen with the effects of climate change.

Climate change threatens the loss of culturally significant land such as (urupā, and flooding of marae), taonga species and resources affecting the perpetuity of mātauranga and tikanga Māori.

Pinnacle's Māori population is also largely employed in primary industries, which are vulnerable to weather extremes such as extended droughts, flooding, salt water in water tables and tidal changes. This can directly impact whānau incomes within these industries.

Unless emissions reduction policies are developed and aligned to health outcomes of Māori in true consultation with tangata whenua, and reflect mātauranga Māori, those policies have the potential to disproportionately affect Māori.

Amongst the backdrop of climate change, te ao Māori is the concept that people need to be more connected and responsible to the land and everything on it. This connection is expressed through kaitiakitanga – guardianship and protection of the environment.

Pinnacle acknowledges and endorses the right of iwi and hapū to exercise rangatiratanga as mandated by Te Tiriti o Waitangi in managing climate change risks and ensuring the welfare of their people, land, rivers, and other treasures.

Impact on Pasifika health

Climate change poses a severe threat to Pacific Island nations, potentially causing displacement and migration that can lead to the loss of ancestral lands, deep-rooted land connections, and crucially cultural identities for families and communities.

As climate impacts become more severe, Pasifika communities in Aotearoa New Zealand are expected to be disproportionately affected. Pasifika peoples often have more crowded households and lower incomes, making them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Our role and commitment

There's an urgent need for primary care and the broader health sector to pinpoint adaptive measures to these challenges. We must also admit and address our own role in the climate crisis, committing to a rapid decrease in greenhouse gas emissions without compromising the delivery of exceptional care and maintaining health equity.

Pinnacle is dedicated to assisting our members and the practices in our network to reduce their climate impacts. We are equally devoted to reducing our own environmental footprint.

In pursuit of this, Pinnacle champions high-quality care, health equity, and environmentally-friendly care, while actively working towards making our operations more sustainable. We are committed to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in developing proactive health initiatives that not only support the resilience and wellbeing of our communities in responding to climate change, but also help rebalance social outcomes for Aotearoa.