



The Paediatric Society of New Zealand
Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa



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Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa | The Paediatric Society of New Zealand calls for an evidence-based, clinician-led approach to dysphoria treatment

Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa | The Paediatric Society of New Zealand (PSNZ) acknowledges the government's announcement regarding restrictions on new puberty blocker prescriptions and reaffirms its commitment to evidence-based, expert-led, compassionate healthcare for all rangatahi in Aotearoa.

PSNZ recognises the significance of this decision for young people experiencing gender dysphoria and their whānau. Our primary concern remains the health, wellbeing, and equity of all young New Zealanders.

"As President of Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa, I want to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to evidence-based, expert-led practice. High-quality care for tamariki and rangatahi must continue to be grounded in robust clinical expertise and evidence, with clinical decision-making residing with experienced clinicians, working in genuine informed partnership with young people and their whānau," says Dr Crone.

Commitment to Evidence-Based Practice

PSNZ supports treatment decisions that are grounded in clinical evidence and expert medical guidance, which provide the best outcomes for the young people in our care. Prescribing decisions should remain between clinicians, patients, and their whānau.

Current international research, including work by institutions such as the Liggins Institute at the University of Auckland, demonstrates that puberty blockers are an established, safe, reversible, and life-saving treatment option that can provide young people time and support while they work through complex identity questions. Like many interventions in paediatric medicine, particularly those affecting psychological wellbeing, the evidence base reflects the real-world complexities and ethics of conducting clinical research with children and young people.

Alignment with Professional Standards

PSNZ stands alongside other leading health professional organisations in Aotearoa, including the Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa (PATHA), the Royal Australasian College of

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Physicians (RACP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), the New Zealand Nurses Organisation College of Child and Youth Nurses (CCYN) (NZNO), Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa | The Māori Medical Practitioners Association (TeORA), New Zealand Society of Endocrinology (NZSE), and international medical bodies, in emphasising that gender-affirming care requires:

- Individualised, holistic assessment by experienced clinicians
- Multidisciplinary team involvement, including mental health support
- Careful, ongoing dialogue with young people and their whānau
- Evidence-informed clinical decision-making

Focus on Rangatahi Wellbeing

We acknowledge the concerns raised by Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission regarding the potential impact this will have on vulnerable young people, as well as their emphasis on equitable healthcare access.

Young people experiencing gender dysphoria deserve compassionate, high-quality healthcare that is mana-enhancing, supports their mental wellbeing, and enables them to make informed decisions about their bodies with the support of experienced professionals. Research indicates that access to safe and appropriate gender-affirming care supports improved mental health outcomes and reduces the already alarmingly high risk of self-harm and suicidality within this vulnerable population.

Our Values and Commitment

PSNZ is committed to the principle that all young people should have the opportunity to flourish with wellness and equity. This means:

- Supporting clinicians to provide the best possible care based on evidence and experience
- Ensuring young people have access to comprehensive, wrap-around, and multidisciplinary support
- Upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, particularly around equitable health outcomes for Māori rangatahi
- Prioritising the voices and lived experiences of rangatahi themselves

We acknowledge the complexity of this issue and the genuine care behind differing perspectives. However, healthcare decisions affecting vulnerable young people should centre on clinical evidence, expert medical judgement, and what we know improves health outcomes.

Moving Forward

PSNZ calls for:

- Healthcare policy decisions to be compassionate, evidence-based, and expert-led
- Ongoing dialogue between government, health professionals, whānau and young people to ensure access to comprehensive, evidence-based care
- Support for clinicians to continue providing the safest, most effective healthcare informed by current research and expert medical consensus
- Continued investment in safe and ethical research that helps us understand which young people benefit most from different treatment approaches

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"We firmly believe that policy affecting tamariki and rangatahi must be informed by evidence, guided by expert clinical consensus and strengthened by the lived experiences of young people themselves. Their voices are essential to shaping decisions that are safe, effective and genuinely responsive to their needs," adds Dr Crone.

The Paediatric Society remains committed to advocating for the health and wellbeing of all young New Zealanders and to supporting our member paediatricians and healthcare professionals who work tirelessly to provide excellent, evidence-based care for this vulnerable group.

Ngā mihi,

Dr Sonja Crone, President of PSNZ and Consultant Paediatrician

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Notes for editors:

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand is the professional body for paediatricians and child health specialists across Aotearoa. Our mission is to advocate for the health and wellbeing of all children and young people, and to support excellence in paediatric practice.

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