

24 March 2026

Submission: Feedback on MCNZ Draft Statements; Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety, and Hauora Māori

From: Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa | Paediatric Society of New Zealand (PSNZ)

PSNZ welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Medical Council of New Zealand's (MCNZ) draft statements on Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety, and Hauora Māori. We offer this submission in appreciation and support for the intent and direction of both documents.

The PSNZ is the national professional body representing paediatricians and child health professionals across Aotearoa. Our multidisciplinary membership works directly with tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau every day. It is from this frontline child health perspective that we offer our feedback.

Endorsement of the Draft Statements

PSNZ endorses both the draft Statement on Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety and the draft Statement on Hauora Māori. These statements represent a clear, principled, and necessary progression in the standards expected of the medical profession in Aotearoa.

Our organisation is fully committed to models of care that reflect the cultural aspirations of patients and their communities. Cultural safety is not a 'nice to have', it is non-negotiable, and an expected norm for every health professional working in Aotearoa.

The PSNZ welcomes the strengthened expectations in these draft statements, including the introduction of concepts such as cultural load and the explicit recognition of intersecting privilege and disadvantage. Most significantly, we support the shift from reflection to action, from aspiration to professional obligation. Fully implemented, these standards have the potential to save lives.

Health Equity and the Paediatric Perspective

PSNZ members observe the effects of inequity daily in their clinical work and acknowledge the many identities that experience significant and well-documented health disparities, often beginning in infancy and childhood.

From a child health perspective, we know that the foundations of health are laid in the earliest years of life. Culturally unsafe care during childhood, whether through unconscious bias, power

“Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness”

imbalances, or failure to engage with whānau in culturally appropriate ways, can have lifelong consequences.

PSNZ acknowledge Tamariki Māori as tangata whenua, who deserve to receive healthcare in mana-enhancing environments where whānau are included, and their cultural identity is affirmed.

Feedback: Statement on Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety

Clarity and Accessibility (Q1)

We find the draft Statement on Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety to be clearly written and well structured. The distinction between cultural competence and cultural safety, as complementary yet distinct concepts, is a helpful framing we anticipate will improve understanding among practitioners. We support the inclusion of both concepts in a single statement to reinforce that they are jointly essential to good medical practice.

Reasonableness of Expectations (Q2)

We consider the expectations outlined in the statement to be reasonable and proportionate. The standards described reflect the high-quality, patient-centred care required in a diverse society. We support the emphasis on ongoing self-reflection, recognition of power imbalances, and accountability for culturally safe outcomes.

From a child health perspective, we would highlight the particular importance of (Q3/4) :

- Engaging whānau as essential partners in paediatric care. Children do not present to health services alone; their whānau are central to assessment, treatment, and ongoing care. While the draft statements do thoughtfully reference whānau, we note that the 2019 statement's explicit requirement to include the patient's whānau in their health care (where appropriate) has not been carried forward with the same clarity (Sections 5 and 10d). This is particularly significant in paediatric practice, where whānau involvement is not optional but central to effective care.

Feedback: Statement on Hauora Māori

Clarity and Accessibility (Q5)

The draft Statement on Hauora Māori is clearly written and purposeful in its direction. The contextual framing of Māori health outcomes within the legacy of colonisation is accurate, important, and necessary for practitioners to understand. The statement's acknowledgement of Māori as tangata whenua with inherent Indigenous rights to health and self-determination is appropriate and well-founded.

Reasonableness of Expectations (Q6)

The expectations outlined in the Hauora Māori statement are reasonable and reflect professional responsibilities that many child health clinicians are working to meet. The call for clinicians to take meaningful action to advance evidence-based health equity for Māori, including through self-reflection, advocacy, and partnership, aligns with our membership's values.

“Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness”

Additional Considerations for Child Health

We would encourage the MCNZ to consider the following additional points as the statements are finalised:

- **Early childhood as a critical health window:** The antenatal period and early years of life are when investment in reducing health disparities can yield the greatest long-term results. The statements could more explicitly acknowledge the particular importance of culturally safe care in perinatal, neonatal, and early childhood settings.
- **Institutional responsibility:** Individual practitioner responsibility must be matched by health system accountability. We encourage the MCNZ and other organisations to continue advocating for operational-level obligations that support clinicians in providing culturally safe care.

The PSNZ congratulates the MCNZ on these draft statements. They represent a meaningful step forward in addressing long-standing needs in our health system, and we are hopeful they will contribute to improved health outcomes for Māori and all communities in Aotearoa.

We consent to our submission being cited in any published summary of responses, including with attribution to the Paediatric Society of New Zealand.

Nga mihi,

Dr Sonja Crone, President PSNZ | Consultant Paediatrician

Dr Owen Sinclair, Past President PSNZ | Paediatrician, Waitakere

Wane Wharerau, (Ngāpuhi), Māori Director PSNZ

Dr Nicola Austin, Associate Professor, Chair National Child Health Networks and NZCYCN

Governance Group, Neonatal Paediatrician

“Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness”