

NGO Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Peace Movement Aotearoa, May 2007: Annex 3

Typed copy of letter received by fax, the original is on Ministry of Health headed paper

15 December 2006

Tena Koe

"The Way Forward" For Treaty of Waitangi Statements in the Health and Disability Sector

The Ministry of Health has been given clear directions on the use of Treaty of Waitangi Statements in the health and disability sector and will no longer make direct references to the Treaty of Waitangi or its principles in new policy, actions plans or contracts. Instead the "way forward" for Treaty of Waitangi statements will focus on improving Maori health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for Maori.

As part of implementing the "way forward" the Ministry has reviewed our (Ministry and DHB) accountability arrangements. All Treaty statements in the 2007/08 accountability package have been slightly amended to align explicitly with section 4 of the New Zealand Public Health Disability Act 2000 (NZPHD Act).

The Ministry is also ensuring its contracts and service specifications with Treaty references are aligned to the "way forward" over time. This involves us looking at service specifications on the National Service Framework (NSF) as well as the specifications used by the Ministry's various directorates.

As I indicated to the Service Framework Group last week, it is important to ensure consistency in contracting around the health and disability sector. We are seeking to work with the DHBs to look at a process for identifying and amending the service specifications that DHBs use, which are not on the NSF. In addition to writing to DHB Chief Executives, DHB Chairs and General Managers Maori, I will also talk with DHBNZ and attempt to finalise a process by the end of February. Your feedback on what a good process might look like would be very helpful.

It is important to stress that existing Treaty of Waitangi statements in legislation, policy and action plans and the sector's overarching obligations as set out in the NZPHD Act are not changing. In particular section 4, which includes an explicit reference to the principles of the treaty of Waitangi, will still guide action and be a focus for DHBs. The challenge is taking this high level statement and operationalising it in documents, plans, contracts and reporting mechanisms throughout the health and disability sector.

If you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Naku noa, na

[signed]

Teresa Wall

Acting Deputy Director-General

Maori Health