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Home care is the beating heart of the health system, sector tells Parliament.

Prevention is not a soft option, it is a direct route to a more resilient society

The Home and Community Health Association (HCHA) has today launched its 2026 Manifesto at Parliament with a critical message for the government: Home and Community Care is not the last resort; it is the first response, HCHA says. The sector wants government to flip the narrative towards prevention, investing in keeping people well and supported in their own homes. The Ministerial Advisory Group's 'A Place to Grow Old' report reinforces this and shows that a \$168 million annual investment could unlock \$830 million in annual savings by 2037/38.

The Manifesto, ***Home Care: The Beating Heart of the Health System***, sets out ten actions for government. These range from funding advanced home care models recommended by the aged care report, to honouring the urgently required six percent funding uplift as a starting point to stabilise the sector, to enabling investment in health technology, and building cross-sector workforce infrastructure that creates an attractive employment pathway for kaiāwhina and community health professionals.

HCHA Chief Executive Lisa Foster said the sector is calling for a fundamental shift in how home care is understood, utilised and funded. She noted the sector's role in easing pressure on general practice and public hospitals is often overlooked.

"It's a false economy to fund the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff while leaving the fence at the top to fall into disrepair. The Minister of Health has rightly acknowledged there is no single simple solution to improving patient access, and home and community care needs to be recognised as part of that solution. When home and community care is under-resourced and cannot keep pace, the pressure backs up through the whole system. GPs and hospitals are left carrying the load, waitlists grow, and everyone trying to access care feels the strain," Foster added.

"The reality is it's all interdependent. We cannot create harmonious healthcare by focusing on one part of the system in isolation, we need cohesion," she explained. "Keeping people well and supported at home reduces the need for GP appointments and hospital admissions in the first place. Any strategy focused on one part of the system, however well intentioned, without investing in the home and community care that sits alongside it, will keep missing that opportunity."

Foster emphasised the case for change extends well beyond the health portfolio.

"Prevention is not a soft option, it is a direct route to a more resilient society," she said. "A healthy nation is a wealthy nation, and a more productive one too. We are all getting older every minute of every day. The decisions made today will shape all of our tomorrows."

The manifesto and accompanying illustrated overview, developed with Big Picture Thinking, were presented to Members of Parliament, officials and sector representatives at Legislative Council Chambers this evening.

HCHA represents home and community health and support providers across Aotearoa New Zealand, spanning aged care, disability support, those impacted by accidents and injuries, plus carer services in every district.

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For media enquiries, interviews or further information, please contact:

Lisa Foster

CEO

Home and Community Health Association lisa.foster@hcha.org.nz

A copy of the full Manifesto and Key Messages document is available on request and via our website.
