

**5 December 2022**

**Media Release: A survey of adult respiratory and sleep services in Aotearoa New Zealand: inequities in the provision of adult respiratory and sleep services**

A survey of adult respiratory and sleep services in New Zealand conducted on behalf of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) highlighting service provision inequities during the 2019-2022 period was published by the New Zealand Medical Journal<sup>i</sup> on 2 December 2022.

The survey's results conclude that where a New Zealander lives determines the level of respiratory care they receive. This hasn't changed since TSANZ' 2006 survey of adult respiratory services<sup>ii</sup> published on the Manatū Houora | the Ministry of Health website sixteen years ago.

Today, over 200,000 New Zealanders still do not have access to a local respiratory physician. This means that access to basic lung functioning testing is out of reach for many, and prophylactic measures aimed at preventing, or lessening the impact of chronic health conditions aren't available to all. There's inequitable service provision, and some New Zealanders aren't getting the health care they need. Preventable respiratory conditions are afflicting people and communities that are already at risk of poor health outcomes. This includes Māori, Pasifika, and rural people.

Additionally, practitioner compliance to the Respiratory Standards varies extensively from region to region.

These results indicate that New Zealanders do not receive equitable access to respiratory and sleep services. We live in a "post code lottery" where some people can access adequate respiratory and sleep services, and others cannot.

Based on the evidence from the survey, TSANZ calls on the New Zealand government to work closely alongside experts in the respiratory field and to take the following actions:

1. Involve respiratory practitioners in the planning of a future health service delivery model that is co-ordinated, well-equipped, and equitable under the Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora umbrellas.
2. Regulate adequate, and nationally consistent performance and patient outcomes measurements.
3. Support the establishment of national clinical networks.
4. Invest in mechanisms to gather intelligence and evaluate respiratory service provision at the community, and primary care level (including Māori and Pasifika-specific services).

The TSANZ regards equitable access to respiratory and sleep services critical to New Zealanders health and wellbeing, and a preventative measure against increasing rates of chronic disease. We are committed to working alongside government to drive public health policy that is evidence-based and stakeholder and consumer informed. Together we can reduce the burden currently impacting one in six people, hospitalising one in eight, and remove respiratory disease from being the third biggest cause of death in our country. If we act now, we can improve respiratory health for all New Zealanders.

- ENDS -

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## References:

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