

## Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health  
Minister Responsible for the GCSB  
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS  
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations  
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry  
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques



13 JUL 2021

Professor Neil Pickering  
Chair  
National Ethics Advisory Committee  
c/o leonie.parminter@health.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Professor Pickering

### **Mixed gender hospital accommodation**

Thank you for your letter of 22 June 2021 outlining the National Ethics Advisory Committee (NEAC)'s concerns about accommodating mixed-gender accommodation in New Zealand hospitals.

I appreciate NEAC sharing the results of their findings from Wellington Hospital regarding mixed-gender accommodation in hospitals and its disproportionate effect on older adults and marginalised groups.

I note NEAC's concerns that mixed gender accommodation has the potential to compromise the safety and security of patients in hospitals and that its practice violates the Patient Code of Rights. Subsequently, I recognise the NEAC is recommending implementing a national policy prohibiting mixed-gender accommodation in hospitals, except high acuity areas.

I am aware that the Ministry of Health and Standards New Zealand's recent review of Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard (NZS 8134:2021) upheld the decision to have the 2021 Standard use gender-neutral language following sector advice from the stakeholder engagement phase of the review. This means that there is no reference to male and female, instead refocussing attention onto the person or whānau, their identity, and what is appropriate for them.

Ministry officials have advised me that criterions 1.4.2 and 3.2.1 of the Standard address the issues outlined by the NEAC. These criteria require that patients who are not comfortable with mixed-gender accommodation should receive appropriate rooming arrangements aligned with their identity and beliefs. The Ministry will continue to work with DHBs on the alignment of the Standard and patient preference expectations. The Standard can be found here: [www.standards.govt.nz/get-standards/sponsored-standards/health-care-services-standards/](http://www.standards.govt.nz/get-standards/sponsored-standards/health-care-services-standards/).

It is also worth noting that my Letter of Expectations for district health boards (DHBs) and subsidiary entities has already been published for 2021/22. It also followed the Standard's guidance of using gender-neutral language.

As you will be aware, in April 2021, I announced the reform of the health system in response to the Health and Disability System Review. This will include a New Zealand Health Charter to set out the values and principles of the new health system. I encourage you and NEAC to engage with the development of the Charter when work on it begins.

Thank you again for writing and the opportunity to engage with you on these matters. I wish you and your colleagues well.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a smaller 'L' and a flourish.

Hon Andrew Little  
**Minister of Health**