



Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health

PRESS RELEASE

19 May 2022

Investing in better health services

- Biggest-ever increase to Pharmac's medicines budget
- Provision for 61 new emergency vehicles including 48 ambulances, along with 248 more paramedics and other frontline staff
- New emergency helicopter and crew, and replacement of some older choppers
- \$100 million investment in specialist mental health and addiction services
- 195,000 primary and intermediate aged children to benefit from continuation and expansion of Mana Ake services to five more areas
- Three Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts made permanent

Budget 2022 gives doctors, nurses and other health professionals working in our public health system the resources they need to get on with the job of looking after patients.

More money for more medicines

"Budget 2022 contains the biggest-ever increase to Pharmac's medicines budget. The Government is investing an extra \$191 million over the next two years, so Pharmac can buy more medicines for more New Zealanders," Andrew Little said.

"This two-year boost will also align funding with the multi-year approach being taken for Health New Zealand and the Māori Health Authority.

Pharmac's Budget will be \$71 million higher in 22/23 and \$120 million higher in 23/24, meaning total funding will be \$1.2 billion, which is up 43 percent since we took office in 2017.

"Pharmac released its *Options for Investment List* last year, aiming to be more transparent about the medicines that it would like to fund when there is funding available. Some are new medicines, and some are existing medicines it would like to fund for wider use.

"Pharmac has assured me it will use this funding to secure as many medicines on its list as it can, with a focus on better cancer treatments, to ensure as many New Zealanders as possible benefit from this biggest-ever increase to its medicines funding."

More ambulances and paramedics

Budget 2022 invests \$166.1 million over four years to secure the future of our ambulance services.

“We’re ensuring that our road ambulances can continue to deliver when New Zealanders need them most.

“Budget 2022 is planned to add 48 ambulances and 13 other vehicles to New Zealand’s road ambulance fleet and allow up to 248 more paramedics and frontline staff to be recruited to support road ambulance services. This includes 22 staff for the communications centre which responds to 111 calls.

“Ambulances respond to more than half a million incidents every year and they have been under significant pressure throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This extra funding will ensure we continue to have a safe, effective and sustainable emergency ambulance service, delivering good health outcomes for New Zealanders.”

Boost for emergency helicopter fleet

\$90.7 million over four years will go towards New Zealand’s air ambulance services. This includes the replacement of some ageing aircraft with modern fit for purpose helicopters and at least one new helicopter with additional crew.

“In 2021 our air ambulance services undertook 10,600 missions, up a thousand on the year before.

“The emergency movement by air of patients is important to ensure they can get to the hospital where they can get appropriate care. Emergency helicopters are also critical to ensure rural communities can get medical help quickly and safely, but also so people in remote locations in the outdoors can be winched to safety.

“Our air ambulances provide an incredibly diverse range of services and our Government is pleased to be able to provide this additional funding to support their work,” Andrew Little said.

Next steps in building a whole new mental health system

As announced pre-Budget, the next steps towards a new mental health system are being supported with a \$100 million investment in specialist mental health and addiction services.

“Labour is the first government to take mental health seriously. Three years ago we made the biggest ever investment to build a solid foundation for a whole new mental health and addiction system.

“We commissioned the He Ara Oranga report, which showed the first step was making it easier to get help earlier and closer to home, so small issues don’t become big problems.

“That’s why we rolled out the Access and Choice programme to provide free mental health and addiction support at local doctors and schools, kaupapa Māori and Pacific settings, as well as universities, online, on the phone and through smart apps.

“More than 380,000 primary mental wellbeing sessions have been delivered and more than 900 additional staff are working to support mental wellbeing in the community.

“Now in Budget 2022, we’re rolling out the plan to improve services for people with more-serious and acute mental health and addiction concerns.

“We’re also continuing to strengthen services for those experiencing mild to moderate distress, to help prevent small issues becoming big problems.

“As also announced pre-Budget, funding has been secured for Mana Ake services for primary and intermediate school-aged students in Canterbury and Kaikōura and to expand the programme to Northland, Counties Manukau, Bay of Plenty, Lakes and the West Coast.

“We’re making Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts permanent in Auckland, Waitākere and the Waikato.

“And we’re extending the life of the Piki pilot programme which provides free integrated primary mental health and addiction support for young people aged 18–25 years in the Greater Wellington area,” Andrew Little said.

Media contact: Talisa Kupenga 027 405 7231