

8 May 2019

Wellington City Council  
101 Wakefield Street  
Wellington 6011

**Re: Te Atakura – First to Zero Blueprint**

Tēna koe,

**Regional Public Health would like to formally register our support for Wellington City Council's blueprint for a Zero Carbon Capital (Te Atakura – First to Zero).**

Regional Public Health serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and as a service is part of the Hutt Valley District Health Board.

We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population, with a particular focus on children, Māori and working with primary care organisations. Our staff includes a range of occupations such as: medical officers of health, public health advisors, health protection officers, public health nurses, and public health analysts.

Climate change represents a serious and imminent threat to population health. New Zealanders are at risk of both the direct health effects of climate change (e.g. extreme weather events, injuries, heat waves and damage to infrastructure) and indirect health effects (e.g. changes in ecosystems and subsequent disease patterns, microbiological contamination of water and potential conflict over resource scarcity)<sup>1</sup>.

However, climate action presents one of the greatest opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders<sup>2</sup>. Climate action that increases active transport, improves housing efficiencies, encourages changes to food consumption and reduces air pollution will also have positive health co-benefits, including a reduction in cancer, cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease<sup>3</sup>.

Well planned climate action can also contribute to significant gains in health equity in Wellington. By committing to climate action policies that are pro-equity, WCC has the potential to make significant

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Society (2017). Human Health Impacts of Climate Change for New Zealand: Evidence Summary. <https://royalsociety.org.nz/assets/documents/Report-Human-Health-Impacts-of-Climate-Change-for-New-Zealand-Oct-2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Watts, N., et al. (2015). "Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health." *The Lancet* **386**(10006): 1861-1914

<sup>3</sup> Bennett, H., et al. (2014). "Health and equity impacts of climate change in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and health gains from climate action." *New Zealand Medical Journal* **3**: 12-16

improvements to the health and wellbeing of those currently experiencing poorer health in the region, including Māori and Pacific populations, those on low-income and disabled people.

RPH **commends** WCC for developing a comprehensive blueprint that considers all aspects of becoming carbon zero and looks at ways to establish infrastructure that encourages positive behaviour changes that will also improve the health and wellbeing of the population.

RPH **commends** WCC on seeking to understand inequity and ways to support low income households to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

It is important to note that the co-benefits between climate action, health and equity will not happen automatically and there is also the potential to increase inequities. Any proposed climate action needs to recognise the existing forms of inequity in Wellington City (and the wider region) and the ways in which climate change interventions might serve to either exacerbate or redress these underlying issues.

An example of this is a citizen who lives in Strathmore, who is a sole parent, has access to one bus service so drives to their minimum wage job as a shift worker. A citizen such as this may experience increased vulnerability through WCC policies that are intended to shift city-wide behaviour. Without ensuring participation of those societal groups, who traditionally have less power and representation in the planning process (ie. what might encourage this individual living in Strathmore to change their transport habits in a way that is accessible, appropriate and affordable) then there is a great risk that this ambitious and important plan to being a zero carbon capital will meet resistance and a lack of engagement from citizens.

RPH **recommends** that WCC make equity a priority and ensure that the blueprint includes a commitment to making certain that this process to zero carbon does not inadvertently deepen societal and health inequities. This can be achieved through inclusive planning that takes into account the diversity of the city and ensures the voices of vulnerable residents are included. This also requires ongoing monitoring and reporting on equity, to monitor who is benefiting most from the policies and if there are any unintended consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

The point of contact for this letter of support is:

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Naku noa, na

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