



Cancer Society

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa

**CANCER SOCIETY
NEW ZEALAND'S**

Strategic Plan

2026 – 2031



Contents

Our karanga	3	Our vision: Working together towards a future free from cancer	14
Our guiding principles	4	Our collective dreams and aspirations	15
We aim to make real change	5	Providing community support	17
Our approach: Collaborating for better understanding	6	Advocating for better outcomes	18
We're committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi	7	Supporting research and innovation	19
We're committed to equitable cancer outcomes	8	Partnering for impact	20
The outlook in numbers	9		
The cancer outlook is challenging and evolving	10		
The economic outlook presents opportunities and challenges	12		

Our karanga

Whakarongo ake au ki te tangi a te manu nei,
a te matui, tui, tui, tuia.

Tuia i runga, tuia i raro, tuia i roto, tuia i waho.

Tuia i te here tangata ka rongō te pō, ka rongō te ao.

Tuia i te muka tangata, i takea mai i Hawaiki nui, i Hawaiki roa,
i Hawaiki pāmamao

Te hono i wairua, ki te whaiao, ki te ao marama. Tihei mauri ora!

E te huinga tāngata o Te Kāhui Matepukupuku.

Ko te amorangi ki mua, ko te hāpai o ki muri, te tūturutanga
mahī pono o te Māori mana motuhake.

He whānau ora te whāinga matua o tēnei rautaki.
He waka eke noa. Mā pango, mā whero, ka oti!

Mai i ngā maunga tapu te reo pūtangitangi o tēnei mihi
kauanuanu ki ngā hau e whā. Tui tuia.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora te katoa.

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karanga maha. Tēnā koutou katoa.



Woven together physically and spiritually

To fulfil the promise of a new dawn with the spirit of life within us

The wellness of the people and their communities is our purpose

Unified internally and with others, we will accomplish our goal

From the mountain tops to the four winds, our efforts will be known

– Matua Henare Kani

Our guiding principles

Our principles guide every decision, action and partnership. They reflect who we are, what we stand for and how we work together to improve outcomes for people impacted by cancer. They ensure we remain focused and accountable as we strive toward a future free from cancer.

We put equity first: We prioritise equity in all our efforts, recognising the disproportionate cancer burden on Māori, Pacific peoples, rural communities and other underserved populations.

We're committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi: We honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by partnering meaningfully with Māori, supporting tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and embedding Māori values and worldviews throughout our work.

Our work centres on people and whānau: People with cancer, their whānau and future generations are at the heart of everything we do. We listen deeply and respond with compassion, dignity and respect.

We value collaboration: We believe we can achieve more through collaboration. We foster strong relationships across the health system, and with communities, researchers, government, other non-government organisations (NGOs) and our Federation members.

Our work is evidence-based: Our decisions, programmes and advocacy are grounded in robust research, data and proven practice to ensure the greatest impact for the people and communities we serve.

We embrace innovation: We actively seek, test and adopt new ideas, technologies and approaches that could improve outcomes and increase impact.

We're nationally aligned and locally responsive: We act as one team, with shared goals and standards, while respecting and responding to local community needs.

We take sustainability and stewardship seriously: We're kaitiaki of the resources entrusted to us — finances, property and people — and we use them wisely to create lasting impact.

We're transparent and accountable: We're open about what we do, how we do it and what we achieve. We hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve.

Our aim: Is to do things differently to drive change



Tēnā koutou katoa

In Aotearoa New Zealand, cancer takes too many lives, disrupts too many of our families and creates too much suffering. While the Cancer Society and the world have made advancements, simply improving what exists is not enough — we must think bigger, act bolder and move swiftly to create a future free from cancer. We envision a future where, if cancer can be prevented, it is. If it cannot, then it's detected early and treated quickly, with patients kept close to whānau and community support.

Our strategic plan represents our commitment to advance Aotearoa New Zealand towards a future free from cancer. This strategy is about reimagining that future: a collective vision shaped by the voices, hopes, and dreams of people and whānau. We cannot accept the status quo.

We know we must do things differently to achieve real change. This means amplifying the voices of those living with cancer, ensuring their experiences shape what we do. It means using our deep reach into communities to maximise our impact where it's needed most. It means increasing our investment in research and innovation to drive progress.

Collaboration is, and will remain, at the heart of our efforts. But we're also prepared to disrupt and advocate where necessary. We're committed to challenging systems, breaking down barriers, and driving equitable and better outcomes for all.

This plan is not a final destination — it's a springboard for action. We hope it will guide and empower us to move together toward a world we want to live in. A future free from cancer could be possible in our lifetime. Join us as we work towards that future.

Julian Grennell (Ngāi Tahu)
Chair, Cancer Society of New Zealand

Nicola Coom
Chief Executive, Cancer Society of New Zealand

Our approach:

Collaboration to improve understanding

I hope cancer will one day be nothing more than a chapter in our history books and medical journals — a battle we fought together and won. I dream of a world where no one else has to endure the pain, the fear or the loss that so many have lived through. May future generations never know the burden of cancer, and may our efforts today be the reason they never have to.

— EMMA , MĀORI CANCER CO-ORDINATOR,
CENTRAL DISTRICTS

We have developed a strategic plan that is ambitious, yet grounded in reality. This strategy reflects a collaborative, inclusive and research-informed approach that aligns with the needs of our communities and maximises our impact across Aotearoa New Zealand.

In August 2024, Cancer Society New Zealand convened a strategic workshop, bringing together the Board, Divisional Chairs, Delegates, Chief Executives and staff. We reinforced a strong commitment to working together, and set a clear signal of unity and purpose. We made a pivotal decision to prioritise research as the first task for national collaboration. By consolidating our respective research strategies and resources into a single, cohesive strategic plan, we aim to achieve greater impact for cancer research and care in New Zealand.

Since then, we've engaged widely — internally and externally, online and in person. We've strengthened our understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead. We've sought the input of donors, families, staff, NGOs, volunteers, and several other stakeholder groups to test our assumptions, explore new opportunities for collaboration, and ensure that diverse perspectives shape our strategy.

To deepen our insights, we commissioned comprehensive market research and tested our brand assumptions. This greater understanding of public perceptions, needs and aspirations has enabled us to ground our strategy in both evidence and community insights.

We're committed to **honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

The Cancer Society is committed to upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all that we do. We recognise Te Tiriti as a foundational document of Aotearoa New Zealand, and honour the special relationship between Māori as tangata whenua and the Crown.

We're committed to:

- partnering with Māori to achieve equitable cancer outcomes
- ensuring Māori voices are heard, respected and reflected in our strategies, services and advocacy.
- actively addressing health inequities, embedding mātauranga Māori in our work and supporting kaupapa Māori-led solutions.

Through authentic relationships, shared decision-making and continuous learning, we'll uphold the principles of partnership, participation and protection as we strive for a future free from cancer.



We're committed to **equitable cancer outcomes**

We're committed to reducing cancer inequities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and achieving our vision. Addressing cancer inequities begins with self-reflection. We have to acknowledge that certain population groups bear a disproportionately large burden of cancer, which shows up in high incidence rates, mortality and overall impact.

Our Equity Charter is a foundational resource and aims to integrate equity into the very fabric of the Cancer Society. It outlines:

- our overarching equity goals
- the strategies for achieving these goals
- the evidence — both national and international — that has informed our approach.

The Equity Charter consists of the following eight equity goals.

1. We're committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and apply it.
2. We strive for kotahitanga. Everyone is aware of inequities and enabled to address them.
3. We strive for mana taurite. Equity is embedded in all our policies, structures, systems and services.
4. We use mātauranga. Research improves equitable cancer outcomes for all New Zealanders, throughout the cancer journey (across the cancer continuum).
5. Our whaitaua improves equity outcomes across the continuum for all New Zealanders.
6. We demonstrate haepapatanga ki te hapori. Accountability mechanisms are embedded throughout the organisation.
7. We demonstrate mahi arataki in what we do. Our equity strategies are sustained and responsive to changing equity needs.
8. We show kaitiakitanga when we interact with the environment. Sustainable and eco-friendly processes are embedded throughout the organisation.

The outlook in numbers

1:3 
New Zealanders
will be diagnosed with
cancer in their lifetime

9,500 of us
die from cancer each year

**Under
50s**

have noticeably more
early-onset cancers

28,000
are diagnosed with cancer
each year (excluding non-
melanoma skin cancers) —
**77 people a day, or 3
people per hour**¹

x2
Māori are **twice as
likely** to die from
cancer than non-Māori

30–50%
of cancers **can be prevented.**²

¹ The State of Cancer in New Zealand 2020: Te Aho o Te Kahu — Cancer Control Agency.
Available at: <https://teaho.govt.nz/index.php/reports-and-numbers/reports/state-cancer-new-zealand-2020> (Accessed: 1 August 2025).

² WHO Report on Cancer: Setting priorities, investing wisely and providing care for all. Geneva: World Health Organization.
URL: <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/330745> (accessed 1 August 2025).

The cancer outlook is challenging and evolving

Cancer is an increasing concern, with more people than ever being diagnosed. Let's address the barriers and adapt to changing needs.

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Aotearoa New Zealand

One in three of us will receive a cancer diagnosis in our lifetimes, and 9,500 people will die from cancer each year.

The cancer burden is forecast to grow in the coming decades due to an ageing population, increased life expectancy and lifestyle-related risk factors. Reducing or removing risk factors could prevent up to half of cancers.

More people than ever are likely to receive a cancer diagnosis

The global burden of cancer is projected to reach unprecedented levels, with more than 29 million people expected to be diagnosed in 2040.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the rate of diagnosis is expected to increase from 28,000 new cases in 2022 to 52,000 in 2040.

Forecast for 2040	Worldwide	Aotearoa New Zealand
Diagnosed in the year	29 million new cases	52,000 new cases
Diagnosed daily	80,000 new cases a day	142 new cases a day

One of the biggest drivers of that growth will be the country's ageing population, as the risk of cancer increases with age.

Prevention and prompt action are increasingly important

Limited access to general practitioners (GPs) and a growing divide between public and private healthcare worsen inequities.

Tackling these problems is even more important in light of two worrying trends. First, the rate of cancer in people under 50 is rising at an alarming rate. Second, Aotearoa New Zealand has one of the highest rates in the world for early-onset colorectal cancer, presenting new challenges for early detection and treatment.

But survival rates for some cancers have improved greatly

Advances in research, technology, immunotherapies and increasingly precise, targeted therapies have ushered in an era of optimism for cancer care. They offer hope for longer survival, improved quality of life and, in some cases, elimination.

I wish that all countries would work together, pooling their resources, to find a long-term cure, which means we no longer lose loved ones to this horrid disease.

Cancer has done enough damage. It's time for the world to unite their scientists, pool their funding, and really knuckle down and find a cure, so people stop suffering!

— STEPH, ANZ, RETAIL SUPPORT

The needs of people with cancer are shifting

Here are two examples of how needs are changing.

- Care in the community is increasingly important — chemotherapy at home is emerging as a viable and patient-centred alternative to hospital-based treatment. Care at home offers people greater convenience and comfort while minimising disruption for families. Many prefer it, especially those living in rural or underserved areas. It's cost-effective and eases the strain on overburdened health systems, too.
- Survivorship care is becoming an essential part of cancer treatment — survivorship care focuses on helping people thrive during and after their treatment. Over the next decade, pre- and post-cancer rehabilitation programmes will play critical roles in improving patients' quality of life by addressing physical, emotional and psychological recovery. The programmes include managing the long-term side effects of treatment, improving physical function and supporting mental wellbeing. Emerging research is revealing compelling evidence that physical activity can play a significant role in improving cancer outcomes.

We must urgently address the significant inequities

Māori and Pacific peoples in New Zealand face disproportionately worse outcomes. Māori are twice as likely to die from cancer as non-Māori. They are diagnosed later, and have less access to treatment and higher mortality rates.

Addressing these disparities will require new approaches and much closer relationships with iwi, Māori and Pacific health providers, and communities.

The economic outlook presents opportunities and challenges

We have to adapt how we fund our services: make the most of opportunities, particularly technology and artificial intelligence (AI), and adapt to investor mindsets.

Opportunities to seize

The 'great wealth transfer' — a big transfer of wealth from one generation to the next — is expected in the next 20 years. Inheritances in Aotearoa New Zealand will grow from around \$27 billion in 2024 to \$1.6 trillion by 2050.³

Average household wealth in Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the highest in the world and ranks even higher for median wealth. But the country ranks low in charitable giving, with just 1.3% left to charities.

Using AI for engaging donors and raising funds is becoming more common, and allows charities to personalise fundraising efforts better. Donors are becoming more inclined to give away their money while they're still alive.

Changing attitudes to consider

Investors care more about their money going to ethical causes, and are increasingly after measurable social and financial returns. This is true for different types of investing, big and small (social impact investing, blended finance models, donor-advised funds and ethical investing strategies).

A desire for a low-carbon economy could shift funding and investments from social causes to environmental ones.

³ JB Were (2025). The Bequest Report 2025. Available at: <https://www.jbwere.co.nz/news-and-insights/the-bequest-report-2025> (Accessed: 15 August 2025).

I am so grateful for the support I receive. It's nice to know the Cancer Society is there if needed — it's peace of mind. But I'd really like my grandchildren to not ever need you. Let's prevent cancer.

— BRIDGETTE, PATIENT

Other good causes to stand out from

Aotearoa New Zealand has many charities for its population (charity to population ratio of 1:183). This can confuse donors and investors, and often creates competition amongst charities.

Funding and environmental pressures to anticipate

Increasing rates of cancer and obesity, and an aging population, will increase healthcare costs and the pressure on government and charitable funding. Preventing cancer in the first place is a cost-effective option.⁴

More frequent extreme weather events will impact infrastructure, supply chains and insurance costs, influencing economic planning, service delivery and giving.

⁴ The State of Cancer in New Zealand 2020: Te Aho o Te Kahu — Cancer Control Agency. Available at: <https://teaho.govt.nz/index.php/reports-and-numbers/reports/state-cancer-new-zealand-2020> (Accessed: 15 August 2025).





Our vision: **Working together towards a future free from cancer**

Te mahi tahi mō te anamata matepukupuku kore.

This vision is our legacy and promise to future generations. It signals a collective desire for the Cancer Society to be braver than ever before — to change the status quo. It's intended to capture the aspirations of the families we serve, the donors who support us and the communities we operate in.

This vision serves to align, inspire and guide us all. It's intended to be bold, aspirational and unifying. It transcends individuals, organisations and time, providing a shared direction that is multi-generational.

While we may not achieve a future free from cancer in our lifetime, it represents the future we strive for.

Our vision is made up of three key elements:

- **Working together:** Our commitment to collective action, recognising that progress requires strong partnerships
- **Towards:** This is a journey, and each action we take and decision we make should take us a step further towards it
- **A future free from cancer:** The hope of the families we serve and our donors' desire to make a difference

Our vision (our big dream)

A future free from cancer

Our mission (what we do)

To reduce the incidence and impact of cancer

Our promise

We support anyone, anywhere, with any cancer.

Our collective dreams and aspirations

The dream is to see rongoā working hand-in-hand with clinical treatments, respecting both worlds.

— REBECCA, CANCER SOCIETY

Our stakeholders shared their moemoeā (dreams) with us as we developed this plan. Their dreams have become our dreams too.

- 1. Fewer preventable cancers:** We'll lead bold, sustained change to eliminate preventable cancer deaths by reducing or removing exposure to risk factors. We'll focus on alcohol, tobacco, obesity, ultraviolet radiation and other modifiable risk factors.
- 2. Cervical cancer is eliminated:** We'll continue to champion the elimination of cervical cancer, with a clear and collaborative action plan for Aotearoa New Zealand, ensuring no one is left behind.
- 3. Tino rangatiratanga shapes cancer care:** Māori self-determination will be embedded across all cancer systems. Whānau will lead decision-making, design and delivery of care, restoring mana and achieving equitable outcomes.
- 4. Everyone lives well with cancer:** Every person with cancer can access the physical, emotional, practical and rehabilitation support they need — wherever they are, whenever they require it and for as long as they need it.
- 5. Care that's connected, personalised and responsive:** Cancer support will be relevant, responsive and digitally enabled — meeting people where they are with seamless wraparound services that reflect their needs.
- 6. Dignity at life's end:** Everyone with terminal cancer will have comfort, choice and connection. They'll be supported to die well, in a way that reflects their values.
- 7. Research transforms lives:** We harness and elevate patient and whānau voices to ensure research and innovations are relevant and improve outcomes in real-world settings.

Achieving our dreams and aspirations

We'll prioritise four areas:

**Providing
community
support**

**Advocating
for better
outcomes**

**Supporting
research and
innovation**

**Partnering
for impact**

Providing community support

I wouldn't have had treatment if it wasn't for the Cancer Society accommodating and transporting me.

— ARRON HEMA

We believe everyone deserves access to services that support them to live well with cancer.

Our strength lies in our reach — being physically present in communities across the country allows us to connect deeply. We'll use our presence to ensure no one faces cancer alone. We'll remove barriers and ease burdens to ensure people can live well with cancer and can access equitable and responsive care.

To achieve this, we'll focus on five things:

1. BROADENING ACCESS

We'll ensure supports are available to those who need them most, when, where and how they need them. That means expanding access to new and existing community services, including psychosocial support, infusion services, screening, pre- and post-rehabilitation services, rongoā Māori, navigation and peer support.

We'll support people to access equitable and responsive cancer care that improves their quality of life.

2. IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

We'll enhance survivorship care and provide comprehensive pre- and post-rehabilitation services to support individuals throughout their cancer journey.

3. INTEGRATING CARE BETTER

We'll codesign integrated care models with families, combining oncology with support services, rongoā Māori, mental health care and end-of-life care.

4. EXTENDING OUR REACH

We'll use digital tools and technology to meet the growing needs of young adults and rural communities, to ensure equitable access to information, support and care.

5. AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

We'll actively engage families with lived experience of cancer to inform and codesign our services, ensuring their perspectives shape care and advocacy. We'll draw on the collective voice to influence change nationally.

Advocating for better outcomes

I'm alive because my cancer was detected early via screening, but Dad wasn't so lucky.

— PIETA GORDON

We believe in driving change that achieves equitable outcomes across the cancer continuum.

We'll focus on addressing the preventable causes of cancer and increasing access to screening, early detection and treatment.

Creating a future free from cancer includes advocating for equitable cancer outcomes across the cancer continuum. We'll focus on modifiable risk factors and double down on prevention, screening and early detection

Our efforts will go into five key priorities:

1. ELIMINATING CERVICAL CANCER

We'll take collaborative action to make cervical cancer a disease of the past. New Zealand has the tools to eliminate cervical cancer — vaccination, screening and treatment. We'll support people to access them.

2. PREVENTING MORE CANCERS

Many of the most diagnosed and deadly cancers are preventable. We'll advocate for sustainable prevention strategies across tobacco, alcohol, obesity, UV protection and immunisation, while keeping a watching brief on vaping.

3. DETECTING CANCER EARLIER

Early detection saves lives. We'll push for free and equitable access to screening, investment in new programmes and targeted awareness campaigns to find and treat cancers earlier.

4. STRENGTHENING CANCER CARE

Everyone with cancer should have access to timely, high-quality care and support. We'll advocate for:

- improvements in treatment time frames, workforce and infrastructure
- services closer to home
- better travel assistance
- access to supportive, palliative and end-of-life care.

We'll also support ongoing investment in new cancer medicines.

5. TACKLING SKIN CANCER

Skin cancer places the greatest financial burden on our health system. We'll prioritise efforts to prevent and detect skin cancers early, reducing long-term healthcare costs and improving outcomes for New Zealanders.

Supporting research and innovation

I have the CDH1 gene mutation. I believe I'm alive because of research.

— MARIE THOMPSON

We believe better cancer outcomes will be achieved through knowledge transfer, new approaches and breakthroughs.

We'll increase our investment in research and innovation. We'll drive targeted, equitable and evidence-based outcomes that advance our strategic priorities.

We'll work toward a future free from cancer by strengthening research and innovation across the cancer continuum — from prevention to survivorship and end of life. By adopting new evidence, treatments and care models faster, we aim to improve outcomes and quality of life and ensure fair access for all New Zealanders.

We'll prioritise our efforts and investment in four areas:

1. ALIGNING OUR EFFORTS FOR GREATER IMPACT

We'll unify our resources and energy to deliver coordinated, strategic action, so we maximise our collective impact for future generations. This will include building mechanisms to elevate patient and community voices.

2. SHAPING EVIDENCE-INFORMED CANCER CARE AND ADVOCACY

We'll use research to understand patient and whānau needs better, and apply those insights to adapt cancer care services. We'll fund research that strengthens our advocacy to provide evidence for meaningful policy and system change.

3. SUPPORTING THE CANCER RESEARCH WORKFORCE

We'll support a growing and capable cancer research workforce through educational opportunities, scholarships with mentoring, and project grants.

4. STRENGTHENING THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SECTOR

We'll connect people and organisations across the sector, support infrastructure and enable knowledge to be translated into real-world settings to improve care and outcomes.

Partnering for impact

Ko te matepukupuku ki te pō, ko te whānau Māori, ki te whai ao ki te ao mārama. / Cancer is a thing of the past. It no longer has a place in the Māori world or in the lives of man.

— GARY THOMPSON, CE HEI ĀHURU MŌWAI

We believe we can achieve more together. Genuine partnerships create stronger communities and more impactful change that is deeply embedded.

To contribute to a future free from cancer, we'll collaborate to enhance our impact. We'll unite our expertise, resources and voices to create stronger, more effective solutions that better serve the needs of whānau impacted by cancer.

Our four priorities are:

- 1. STRENGTHENING CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION**
We'll build and nurture formal alliances that result in coordinated efforts and address shared challenges. By working together, we can reduce duplication, close gaps in care and create a seamless experience for those we support.

We'll unite and align Cancer Society efforts, collaborating across the health sector to drive large-scale change.

2. ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS WITH MĀORI AND PACIFIC COMMUNITIES

We'll collaborate with Māori and Pacific leaders and organisations to deliver culturally safe, equitable cancer care. This includes codesigning initiatives that address the unique needs of these communities and embedding tino rangatiratanga into all aspects of our mahi.

3. ENGAGING AND ELEVATING PARTNERS AND DONORS

We'll expand and create shared value partnerships to unlock new funding opportunities and make the most of resources. These partnerships will support innovation, scale successful initiatives and increase our ability to deliver impactful programs to communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

- 4. COLLABORATING AND CONSOLIDATING INTERNALLY:** We'll unite in our vision. We'll look for opportunities to maximise our reach and impact through consolidation where it makes sense.

Where I would like to see cancer in the future is for it to be completely eliminated, where people do not need to fear this disease for themselves or their whānau. As this is such a long-term goal, what I would like to see in the meantime, which is much more achievable, is for disparities in health and cancer for our Māori and Pasifika populations to be reduced.

— MEL HIGSON, RADIATION THERAPIST, HEALTH NEW ZEALAND

My wish is to educate our tamariki [and] our mokopuna about how to stay well, so cancer becomes rarer with every generation.

— PATIENT



It would be amazing to see cancer rates show a decrease, with Māori and Pacific showing the biggest rate of decline. For those with cancer, I'd like to see not only local care and treatment, but more cancers that are able to be treated with oral cancer drugs (with few side effects). Importantly, I'd like that every New Zealander with cancer and their whānau feel supported by a well-resourced health system.

— MICHELLE GUNDERSEN-REID, SUPPORTIVE CARE MANAGER



Cancer Society

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa

He waka eke noa

We're all in this together