

Wednesday, 13th September 2023

An urgent call to arms for political action on cancer

A coalition of New Zealand's leading cancer charities, CANGO (Cancer Non-Governmental Organisations) has issued an urgent call to our political parties ahead of the election, to take action on cancer.

Cancer remains New Zealand's single biggest cause of death and 75,000 Kiwis will be diagnosed with it during the next term of government. Although great strides have been made to improve cancer survival in our country, New Zealanders still face vastly different experiences when it comes to their outcomes and the care and treatment they receive.

CANGO's election manifesto outlines four critical solutions for the next government to act on, in the areas of medicines funding, clinical research, assistance with travel costs, and healthcare workforce.

"Kiwis deserve world-class health care to improve their quality of life throughout treatment, increase their chance of survival and ensure they can get back to their everyday lives after cancer. But this is far from possible while we face stark disparities in outcomes for Māori and Pacific peoples and those in financial distress, slow, unfair and under-funded access to medicines, critical workforce issues in the health sector without urgent solutions, and a lack of investment in innovation, research and clinical trials," says Philip Hope, spokesperson for CANGO and CEO of Lung Foundation New Zealand, a member of CANGO.

"Any one of us could develop cancer so these issues are important to all New Zealanders. CANGO members are working hard to solve problems, but the big solutions require political leadership and action. In order for cancer to become a 'good news' story, we need our politicians to galvanise around current solutions, like they did for Covid-19, while ensuring we are set up for the future," Philip Hope adds.

The nine member charities are asking the next government to:

- Allocate \$300 million a year specifically for Pharmac to implement a fast-track assessment and funding scheme for cancer medicines within 12 months;

- Provide funding of 0.01% in the government's health budget for clinical research, implement trials NZ-wide and embed cancer research into health sector KPIs;
- Update and implement a fully-funded National Travel Assistance Scheme that is straight-forward, fair and fit-for-purpose by 2024;
- Develop, publish and action an integrated workforce plan for all cancers that is future-focussed while addressing urgent needs, ensuring that a lack of capacity or advancement is not causing harm and resulting in unnecessary deaths.

CANGO is an alliance of nine prominent cancer NGOs, formed in 2007 in an effort to increase collaboration among the charities. CANGO members are;

Bowel Cancer New Zealand

Breast Cancer Foundation New Zealand

Cancer Society of New Zealand

Gut Cancer Foundation

Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand

Lung Foundation New Zealand

Melanoma New Zealand

Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand

Unicorn Foundation New Zealand

These charities work together with NZ's health agencies and other stakeholders in the cancer sector to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer on New Zealanders and increase survival.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact;

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ELECTION REQUEST FROM CANGO

CANGO, an alliance of New Zealand's leading cancer charities, calls for our political parties to take urgent action on cancer, starting with the four most critical changes needed.

75,000 New Zealanders will be diagnosed with cancer during the next term of government. They, along with the thousands living with cancer today, deserve world class health care to improve their quality of life and increase their chances of survival. Their whānau, communities, and employers deserve this too.

But that is far from possible in New Zealand today, with vastly inequitable experiences, timeframes and outcomes, particularly for Māori and Pasifika and those already in financial distress; a slow, unfair and under-funded medicines access system in Pharmac; critical workforce issues without urgent solutions; and a lack of investment in innovation, research and clinical trials to move us forward.

CANGO wants to change that and for cancer to be a 'good news' story this election, with our politicians galvanising around solutions like they did for COVID-19.

CANGO's four critical solutions for the next government to act on.

1. Fund Pharmac \$300million p/a to establish and implement a fast-track assessment and funding scheme for cancer medicines, within 12 months.
2. Require baseline funding of 0.01% in the government's health budget for clinical research, implement trials New Zealand wide and embed cancer research into health sector KPIs, so that New Zealanders can benefit from research-led care.
3. Update and implement a fully funded National Travel Assistance Scheme that is straight-forward, fair and fit-for-purpose by the end of 2024 to minimise the financial impact of cancer and ensure people can access the treatment they need no matter where they live in New Zealand.
4. Develop, publish and action an integrated workforce plan for all cancers that is future focused while addressing urgent needs, ensuring that a lack of capacity or advancement is not causing harm and resulting in unnecessary deaths.

About CANGO

CANGO (Cancer Non-Governmental Organisations) is an alliance of prominent New Zealand cancer charities including:

- Breast Cancer Foundation NZ
- Bowel Cancer New Zealand
- Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand
- New Zealand Gynaecological Cancer Foundation
- Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand
- Unicorn Foundation New Zealand
- Melanoma New Zealand
- Lung Foundation New Zealand
- Gut Cancer Foundation
- Cancer Society of New Zealand

The group was formed in 2007 in an effort to increase collaboration among cancer charities.

Chief Executives of member organisations meet quarterly to discuss key issues facing the sector; to meet and share information with representatives from Te Aho o Te Kahu, the Ministry of Health and others working in cancer-related areas; and to work together on specific initiatives that reflect the shared goal of all members to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer on New Zealand and New Zealanders.

