

News release – June 2026

Budget 2026 misses major opportunity to ease pressure on health system through allied health investment

AHANZ says stronger primary care focus welcome, but key workforce solution overlooked

Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand (AHANZ) says Budget 2026 represents a missed opportunity to make greater use of one of the country's most cost-effective and underutilised healthcare solutions - the allied health workforce.

AHANZ co-chair Orquidea Tamayo Mortera said while the organisation welcomed the Government's increased investment in primary and community care, the Budget failed to recognise the critical role allied health professionals can play in reducing pressure on New Zealand's struggling health and aged care systems.

"We welcome the Government's acknowledgement that stronger primary care and more community-based healthcare are essential to improving health outcomes for New Zealanders," Ms Tamayo Mortera said.

"But meaningful health system reform cannot happen without properly integrating allied health professionals into multidisciplinary community care teams."

Ms Tamayo Mortera said allied health professions include physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech-language therapists, dietitians, psychologists, social workers, podiatrists, audiologists, music therapists and many others.

They provide highly cost-effective services that help prevent illness escalation, reduce hospital admissions, support rehabilitation, and keep older people living independently for longer.

"New Zealand's health system continues to operate in a reactive mode, with enormous pressure on hospitals, emergency departments, aged residential care, mental health services and general practice," she said.

"Yet allied health professionals are uniquely positioned to help address many of these pressures through prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and community-based support."

Ms Tamayo Mortera said AHANZ was disappointed the Budget did not include a stronger workforce strategy or targeted investment to expand allied health services as part of integrated primary care delivery.

"International evidence increasingly shows that multidisciplinary models - where allied health professionals work alongside doctors, nurses and other providers in coordinated community settings - deliver better patient outcomes and better value for taxpayers.

"At a time when New Zealand faces significant fiscal constraints and growing healthcare demand, investing more strategically in allied health simply makes economic sense."