

AHANZ MEMBERS' ADVOCACY KIT

Election 2026: Allied Health at the heart of a thriving health system

New Zealand's health system is under pressure—long waits, workforce shortages, and barriers to care that could be prevented. Allied health professionals are essential to keeping people well, supporting recovery, and enabling independence, yet the sector remains under-recognised in policy and funding.

As Aotearoa heads toward the 2026 General Election, AHANZ is strengthening its advocacy to ensure allied health is fully integrated into health system planning and investment. We need members alongside us. Your voice, experience, and community trust make the strongest case for change.

This advocacy kit includes:

- Four priority positions from the AHANZ manifesto
- Policy papers outlining practical solutions
- Clear talking points for engaging decision-makers
- Guidance for local advocacy

Our goal:

A health system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, advances equity, and recognises allied health as essential infrastructure for the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

AHANZ's four advocacy positions

- **Position 1:** Joined-up, community-based care
- **Position 2:** Prevention, not just treatment
- **Position 3:** Better information and visibility
- **Position 4:** Reaching everyone, everywhere

These four priorities guide AHANZ's advocacy with political parties and policymakers. Together they set out a pathway toward a health system that is community-based, prevention-focused, and equitable.

Advocacy Position 1. Joined-up, community-based care

The issue: People should be able to access the right care, from the right professional, at the right time, close to home. Allied health needs to be embedded in Tier 1 teams alongside GPs and nurses.

The gap: The system still leans on hospitals and GP-centred models, leaving many allied health professionals outside publicly funded primary care. This creates bottlenecks, delays, and unmet demand.

The impact: Fragmented services hit Māori, rural communities and those facing socioeconomic disadvantage hardest. People experience health as part of everyday life, not as a series of clinical appointments.

What government must do:

- Make multidisciplinary community care the standard

- Fund collaborative teams, not isolated services
- Enable direct access to allied health professionals where appropriate
- Strengthen referral and triage pathways

Advocacy Position 2. Prevention, not just treatment

The issue: New Zealand needs to invest in keeping people well, not only treating illness. Allied health is central to prevention, early intervention and long-term condition support.

The gap: Most funding still arrives after people become seriously unwell, despite many conditions being preventable or manageable earlier. Many major drivers of ill health, including chronic disease, injury, mobility issues and disability, could be reduced through earlier intervention.

The impact: Late intervention increases hospital pressure and reduces quality of life, especially for communities already facing inequities. Preventative care access is most difficult for communities facing inequities. Investing in prevention improves health outcomes while reducing long-term costs across the system.

What government must do:

- Fund prevention as a core Tier 1 function
- Set up a fund for allied-health-led prevention programmes
- Support community rehabilitation and self-management
- Prioritise prevention for communities with the greatest inequities

Advocacy Position 3. Better information and visibility

The issue: The health system cannot plan effectively without clear data on allied health services and workforce capacity.

The gap: Allied health is poorly captured in national datasets and workforce planning, limiting visibility of demand and unmet need.

The impact: Poor data leads to poor planning, and fragmented digital systems prevent clinicians from sharing information, making coordinated care harder.

What government must do:

- Improve national allied health workforce and service data
- Reinststate comprehensive health system reporting
- Invest in interoperable digital health records
- Measure outcomes that reflect function, participation and wellbeing

Advocacy Position 4. Reaching everyone, everywhere

The issue: Access to care should not depend on location, income or background. Allied health must reach communities with the greatest need.

The gap: Access remains uneven across Aotearoa, with Māori and Pacific communities, disabled people, rural communities and high-deprivation areas facing the biggest barriers.

The impact: Inequities persist, undermining public health goals and Te Tiriti obligations. Designing services with and alongside communities is essential to achieving equitable outcomes.

What government must do:

- Fund mobile and outreach allied health services
- Support iwi-led and community-governed models
- Invest in equity-focused commissioning
- Enable direct access in underserved communities

A health system grounded in equity and partnership will deliver better outcomes for all New Zealanders.

AHANZ members' talking points toolkit

Use these PREP-structured points when speaking with MPs, candidates, media or community groups.

Allied health includes 40+ professions supporting people's function, communication, mobility, development and independence.

1. Allied health is essential to the health system

Point: Allied health professionals are vital to keeping New Zealanders healthy and independent.

Reason: They deliver prevention, rehabilitation, disability support and chronic condition management.

Example: Over 30,000 allied health professionals support people across Aotearoa at every life stage.

Paraphrase: Allied health is essential infrastructure for a sustainable health system.

2. Community-based care works better

Point: Care should be delivered as close to home as possible.

Reason: Many needs can be safely and effectively met by allied health in community settings.

Example: International models show multidisciplinary primary care improves outcomes and reduces hospital demand.

Paraphrase: When people get the right care in their community, outcomes improve and pressure eases.

3. Prevention saves money and improves lives

Point: Investing in prevention keeps people well and reduces hospital pressure.

Reason: Many major chronic conditions are preventable with early support.

Example: Allied health provides early intervention for mobility issues, chronic pain, hearing loss and developmental delays.

Paraphrase: A prevention-focused system improves wellbeing and reduces long-term costs.

4. Allied health must be visible in policy

Point: Health policy must reflect the full workforce delivering care.

Reason: Allied health is often missing from national data and workforce planning.

Example: Without accurate data, policymakers cannot plan services or address shortages.

Paraphrase: If allied health is invisible in data, the system cannot plan effectively.

5. Equity must be central to health reform

Point: Access to care should not depend on postcode, income or background.

Reason: Many communities face barriers to allied health services.

Example: Mobile and community-led services bring care to underserved populations.

Paraphrase: A fair system ensures everyone can access the care they need.

6. A sustainable allied health workforce is essential

Point: A strong workforce is critical to delivering equitable, high-quality care.

Reason: Many professions face shortages, uneven distribution and limited training pathways.

Example: Some communities lack access to audiology, speech-language therapy, podiatry or rehabilitation, leading to preventable deterioration.

Paraphrase: Without a sustainable workforce, people miss out and the system cannot meet its goals.

7. Team-based care delivers better outcomes

Point: Integrated, team-based care ensures people get the right support at the right time.

Reason: Collaboration across allied health, medical, nursing and community providers improves coordination and effectiveness.

Example: Multidisciplinary teams reduce duplication and support early intervention for long-term conditions.

Paraphrase: A connected system works better for people and for the workforce.

8. Honouring Te Tiriti strengthens health outcomes

Point: Allied health has a responsibility to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all aspects of care.

Reason: Māori must have equitable access to culturally safe, whānau-centred services designed in partnership with Māori.

Example: Kaupapa Māori and iwi-led services improve outcomes by embedding tikanga, strengthening whanaungatanga, and ensuring care reflects Māori aspirations for wellbeing.

Paraphrase: Honouring Te Tiriti means designing services with Māori, not just for Māori.

9. Allied health drives economic participation

Point: Investing in allied health strengthens Aotearoa's economic wellbeing.

Reason: Allied health helps people stay mobile, communicate, work and live independently, reducing welfare costs and supporting workforce participation.

Example: Early rehabilitation reduces time off work and prevents long-term disability.

Paraphrase: Allied health supports both health and economic productivity.

How AHANZ members can advocate

Allied health professionals are trusted voices in their communities. Your real-world experience makes you powerful advocates for the sector. Here are practical ways you can support Allied Health advocacy.

Elevator Speech – Option 1 (shortened)

Allied health is a vital part of Aotearoa's health system. More than 50 professions support mobility, communication, development, recovery and independence, helping people stay well in their communities and reducing pressure on hospitals. Despite this impact, allied health is often invisible in policy and funding. Strengthening this workforce, and ensuring services are accessible, culturally safe and community-based, is essential for a fair, sustainable health system.

Elevator Speech – Option 2 (shortened)

Allied health is part of the wider whānau of care supporting hauora in our communities. Our professions help people live well in their own kāinga, connected to their whenua and whānau. We uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi by partnering with Māori, supporting Kaupapa Māori approaches and ensuring services are culturally safe and grounded in tikanga. When allied health is visible, resourced and working in true partnership, whānau receive earlier support and avoid preventable harm which strengthens wellbeing across Aotearoa.

Practical ways to advocate

- **Meet your local MP or candidate:** Invite them to your workplace and share the challenges your patients face and how allied health improves outcomes.
- **Attend community meetings and forums:** Ask how they will improve access to community-based care.
- **Write to MPs and candidates:** Explain why allied health matters and what you see in your practice.
- **Promote AHANZ advocacy locally:** Share key messages through networks, community groups and social media.
- **Provide case studies:** Real examples of outcomes and service gaps strengthen AHANZ's voice.

Why your advocacy matters

Allied health professionals help people stay well, recover and live independently—yet the sector remains under-recognised in policy and funding. AHANZ's manifesto outlines the path forward: build community-based care, invest in prevention, improve visibility in data and policy, and ensure services reach everyone who needs them.

With the 2026 election approaching, your voice can help ensure allied health is part of the national conversation about the future of health care.