

8 August 2025

New Zealand Eating Issues, Eating Disorders, and Ngā Māuiui Kai Strategy – Te Hiringa Mahara feedback

Te Hiringa Mahara is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the New Zealand Eating Issues, Eating Disorders, and Ngā Māuiui Kai Strategy (the Strategy).

We welcome this new strategy

- We welcome a new strategy for supporting people experiencing eating issues, eating disorders and ngā māuiui kai, including their whānau, family and supporters, noting that the previous strategy was developed in 2008. We appreciate the consideration of a full continuum of eating disorders and services, including ARFID (avoidant restrictive food intake disorder).
- This strategy is an opportunity to set the direction to provide better interventions and support for people experiencing eating issues, eating disorders and ngā māuiui kai, including their whānau, family and supporters.
- We would like to see the Strategy strengthened to make the most of this opportunity, and better drive action.

Future opportunities could be more tangible

- We consider the strategy could be strengthened, with more explicit commitments to future opportunities. The strategy currently reads as a summary of the status quo, with references to future opportunities and some elements of what would normally be in an action plan.
- We propose that wording is strengthened throughout the strategy, so that future opportunities are presented as tangible goals. This will give people and whānau more clarity about what will – or won't – be prioritised and actioned as a result of the strategy. As an example, “**develop** school-based programmes for media literacy and body image” rather than “**explore** school-based programmes for media literacy and body image.”

Strengthen connections between experiences, feedback, initial actions and future opportunities

- Data and insights presented in the strategy paint a picture of poorer experiences and outcomes for particular groups, such as Māori, LGBTQIA+ and young people. However, it is unclear how the strategy is seeking to improve access to support, intervene earlier or prevent eating issues, eating disorders or ngā māuiui kai for these people and their whānau.

- Eating disorder care is a highly specialised area, and there are very limited specialised services available, particularly for people outside of urban centres . This means some people having to relocate away from support networks to access specialist care, and not having access to ongoing, appropriate community care after discharge, when they return home. We know from our assessment of admissions of young people into adult inpatient services, how difficult and traumatic it can be to move away from home to access support.
- The strategy needs consideration of how access to appropriate services will improve, to address unmet need and ensure equity. We propose that the strategy include stronger references to how tangible opportunities or initiatives will address inequities for people and whānau.
- The Strategy should also include reviews of the effectiveness of services, to ensure they are adequately reaching and serving the communities who need them.

Provide clarity about responsible agencies, entities, and resources

- We appreciate the strategy highlighting the need to partner with Health New Zealand to implement the strategy.
- The strategy should clarify which agency or health entity is responsible for the initial actions and future opportunities, including identifying the resources required and where the budget will come from. This is important as it gives people and agencies clarity about how their work is seeking to improve outcomes and experiences, and will make it easier to monitor and evaluate the strategy and impacts.