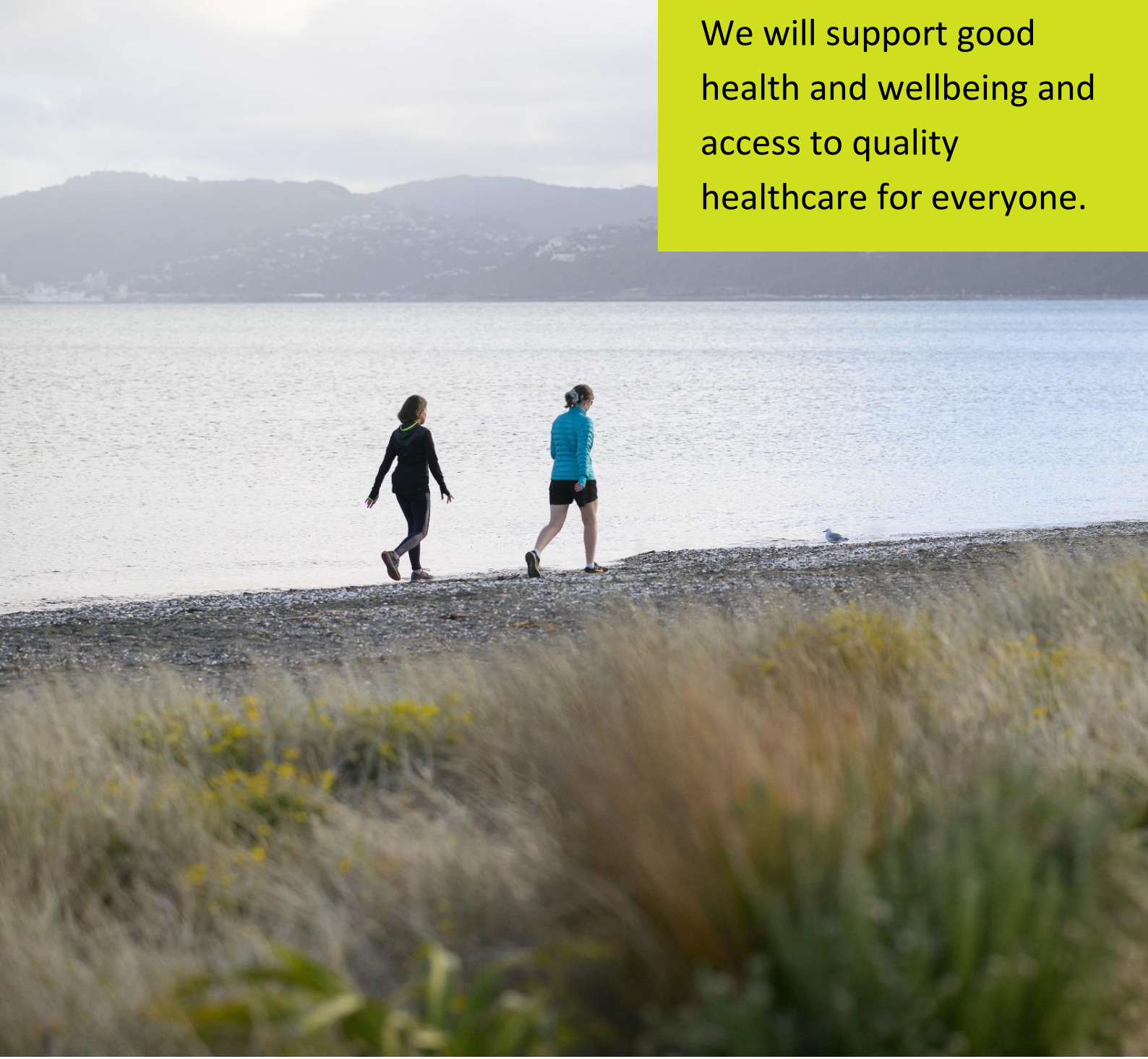


HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

A photograph of two people walking away from the camera on a pebbly beach towards the ocean. The person on the left is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black leggings. The person on the right is wearing a bright blue puffer jacket and black shorts. In the background, there is a large body of water and a range of hills under a cloudy sky. A seagull is visible on the beach near the water's edge. The foreground is filled with out-of-focus, dry grass and some green plants.

We will support good health and wellbeing and access to quality healthcare for everyone.

IN 2055, PEOPLE ENJOY GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt has 6,700 dedicated people working in health care and social assistance. Our city is home to Hutt Hospital, GP practices, pharmacies, kaupapa Māori providers, laboratory and community organisations.

Good health and wellbeing is shaped not only by the healthcare system, but by the places we live, the connections we share, the food we eat, and the opportunities we have to be active, safe and supported.

Our community can make a difference – as demonstrated by Wainuiomata youth who led a ban on smoking in cars, and Kōkiri Marae foodbank which fed thousands through the COVID-19 lockdowns.

While many whānau in our city enjoy good health, inequities remain—particularly for Māori, Pacific peoples, people with a disability, and those living in high-deprivation areas. Barriers such as cost, housing insecurity, and limited availability of some services means that not everyone can get the care, nutrition and support they need.

At the same time, we are seeing new opportunities through digital health tools, integrated community hubs, and prevention-focused services that bring care closer to where people live.

Building healthy communities requires action in multiple areas. It means designing neighbourhoods that encourage activity, ensuring good kai is affordable and accessible, providing wrap-around support for families facing complex challenges, and attracting skilled clinicians to our region who can enable the delivery of high-quality care.

We will ensure that everyone is supported to meet holistic wellbeing (hauora), with health providers resourced to meet hauora needs.

This chapter outlines key initiatives to help realise our vision for health and wellbeing in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt by 2055. It concludes with a “What You Can Do” section, offering practical ways you can support and contribute locally to building Tō Tātou Tāone 2055 – Our City 2055.

INDICATORS

WE WILL TRACK PROGRESS OF THE FOLLOWING INDICATORS:

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
% OF PEOPLE ENROLLED WITH A GP		95%
% OF CHILDREN FULLY IMMUNISED AT 2 YEARS	82.3%	95%
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN LOWER HUTT	4,659	<1,000

BACKGROUND

Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt has a wide range of community and hospital services, including Hutt Hospital, which provides care to communities across Lower Hutt and the wider region. We also have 20 GP practices, pharmacies, kaupapa Māori providers, laboratory and community organisations. Specialist services in the community include district nursing, rehabilitation services, social work, alcohol and drug services and home support services.

State of health and wellbeing

The Māori health model, Te Whare Tapa Whā, considers holistic wellbeing, including taha tinana (physical wellbeing), taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing), taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) and taha whānau (social wellbeing), with the foundation - the whenua and all that it hosts (environmental wellbeing).

The majority of people in our city consider they are in good physical health (68%) and in good mental health (66%).¹

Our city falls below some national health targets: only 82.3% of children in the Hutt are fully immunised at two years, including only 66% of Pacific children (target: 95%).²

Obesity is a growing concern, with 73% of Hutt Valley adults overweight or obese, compared to 66% nationally.³ Local rates of cancer are also high – 683 in Hutt Valley, compared to 546- national average (people with new cancer registrations per 100,000 people (2022)).⁴

There has been a strong focus on Smokefree Hutt Valley, and the proportion of regular smokers in Lower Hutt dropped from 23% in 2006 to 8.2% in 2023.⁵ However, the rates of vaping are increasing across the country and our city – particularly among young people. 19% of Hutt Valley residents smoke and/or use e-cigarettes/vapes/daily (2024).⁶

The broader context

The population of Lower Hutt is both growing and ageing. The number of people aged 70 years or older is expected to nearly double over the next 30 years, while our city's population is projected to grow by around 37,000 by 2053. Our healthcare system will need to address the needs of more people and larger numbers of elderly.

Our city includes areas of high deprivation – Taitā, Moerā and Te Ngaengae (Naenae), where residents are more likely to face challenges such as lower incomes, overcrowded housing, food insecurity and inadequate heating. Due to factors like limited access to healthcare, poor nutrition, and higher levels of stress and anxiety, people living in high deprivation areas also experience higher rates of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and respiratory conditions.

Across New Zealand, there has been a recent marked increase in homelessness, which is driven by systemic housing shortages and costs, tightening eligibility for emergency housing, rising cost of living, and gaps in mental health and addiction services. In 2023, 4,650 people experienced homelessness in Lower Hutt. 7.1% of households experience household crowding.⁷

¹ Quality of Life Survey

² Health New Zealand, Q3 2024/25

³ NZ Health Survey, 2017-2020

⁴ Ministry of Health, 2025

⁵ Census 2023

⁶ Ministry of Health, 2025

⁷ Census, 2023

Our healthcare system is under pressure, grappling with GP and midwife shortages, stretched hospitals, and increasing demand for mental health and social support. In 2024, 73% of general practices in Hutt Valley had 'Closed Books', creating a barrier to accessing health care.⁸ The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still being felt, particularly on delayed surgeries. Preparing for future pandemics and the effects of climate change are critical future health challenges.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE LOWER HUTT COMMUNITY

While people appreciate existing health services and the hospital, there were concerns about *"health services becoming too stretched"*, including GP and midwife shortages, with calls for affordable, high-quality medical and dental care, *"Access to affordable, timely and top notch healthcare system."* There was also an emphasis on culturally appropriate services and preparedness for future health crises. Mental health was a significant concern, with hopes for better support systems to address rising issues. Additionally, food security was highlighted, with worries about *"more whānau going hungry"* and aspirations for accessible, healthy kai for all.



This strategy focuses on supporting health and holistic wellbeing. We will design a city that makes it easier to be well—with walkable streets, access to nutritious food choices, and green spaces. We will also provide wrap-around support for whānau facing complex challenges.

Our city will actively seek investment in infrastructure and services to develop Lower Hutt as a centre of healthcare excellence, and work to attract skilled clinicians who can deliver high-quality care.

In the following pages, you will see the initiatives that will help us achieve our goals.



Our goal to achieve Healthy Communities supports SDGs to achieve food security and improved nutrition, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, and reduce inequality.

FUTURE FOCUS

⁸ "An update on Closed Books in general practice in Aotearoa New Zealand" in *Journal of Primary Health Care*, January 2025

INITIATIVE 9

SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LOOK AFTER THEIR HOLISTIC WELLBEING, TO STAY HEALTHIER FOR LONGER

We will support people to take charge of their wellbeing—physically, mentally, spiritually and socially—so they can live longer, healthier lives. Good health is shaped not just by clinical care, but also by housing, income, food, connection to others and the environment. We will support holistic and preventative approaches that strengthen resilience, reduce chronic disease, and improve health equity—including kaupapa Māori services, and culturally safe care for Pacific and ethnic communities.

Promote community-led health and wellbeing

We will ensure care is available where and when people need it—starting with those who face the greatest barriers. We will support tools that make it easier to engage with wellbeing, such as the Te Ara Pae Ora app, which helps individuals and whānau take control of their own wellbeing journey. Efforts will focus on prevention and early support, rather than treatment alone. For example, accessible mental health programmes, early parenting support, and services for older adults to stay active and socially connected.

Expand community-based hubs

We support the development of community hubs that bring together physical health, mental wellbeing, social support and prevention under one roof. Recent examples include a new community wellness centre which will provide a broad range of support to people with mental health challenges, and a new Hutt Valley Health Hub, which houses a large GP practice, pharmacy, specialist

“We need to normalise having open conversations about mental health, what it is, and how we can deal with it together.” City Summit Participant, 2024

consulting rooms and outpatient dialysis clinic – all in one community hub.

Kaupapa Māori services

Kaupapa Māori services will continue to play a vital role in providing holistic support for our city’s growing Māori population. This includes Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa and Te Āti Awa Hauora Services, including marae-hosted clinics, Waiwhetū Hauora Medical Centre, and Kōkiri Marae Keriana Olsen Trust, which offers whānau-centred services.

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER
Promote community-led health and wellbeing	Health New Zealand, Te Awakairangi Health Network
Expand community-based hubs, including kaupapa Māori hauora services.	Health New Zealand, Mana Whenua

INITIATIVE 10

DEVELOP LOWER HUTT AS A CENTRE OF HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE, ATTRACTING CLINICIANS TO LIVE AND PRACTICE HERE

Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt will position itself as a leading place to live, work and innovate in the health sector. We face growing demand for services, an ageing population, and ongoing shortages of GPs, nurses, midwives and other health professionals. At the same time, clinicians are looking for a city that offers a good quality of life, professional development, and opportunities to work in forward-looking care systems.

Seek investment in city healthcare

Planned and recent investments in healthcare infrastructure and services will enhance Lower Hutt's capacity to provide high quality care and trial system innovations. This includes the Nurses in Pharmacies initiative, regional rollout of the secure electronic health record system, HealthOne, and exploring telehealth solutions. Construction is underway on the new Sir Mark Dunajtschik Mental Health Centre - a \$38 million government investment and \$50 million philanthropic donation, providing 34 adult acute inpatient beds. Plans are also underway for an expanded Lower Hutt After-Hours Medical Centre, which will significantly increase access to urgent daytime care.

Support training, development and career pathways

Education providers, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, and community health organisations will work collaboratively to increase access to local training, internships and mentoring—especially for Māori, Pacific and people with a disability who are under-represented in the health workforce. We will

also encourage young people in Lower Hutt to pursue careers in health and provide career development pathways so that talent stays here. This includes supporting initiatives such as Whiteria's Bachelor of Nursing Māori.

Build a place clinicians want to live

We will continue investing in housing, transport, schools, green spaces and amenities that make Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt an attractive place for health professionals and their whānau to call home, and will promote our city to clinicians. We will also celebrate the contribution of our local health workforce, fostering a local culture that values clinicians, caregivers and community health workers as essential to the city's future.

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER
Invest in city healthcare infrastructure and services.	Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora
Support training, development and career pathways.	Health New Zealand



INITIATIVE 11

PROVIDE WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT FOR LOWER HUTT’S MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt will ensure that families facing the greatest challenges have access to joined-up, compassionate and effective support. Issues like poverty, homelessness, family harm, mental distress and truancy often occur together. These issues cannot be solved in isolation. We will strengthen wrap-around approaches that bring together housing, health, education, social services, police, mana whenua, and community networks to meet people where they are and help them move forward.

Address interlinked challenges through joined-up services

We will support collaborative models that connect whānau with the support they need—such as health care, income advice, housing navigation, and parenting support. This includes Education, community providers, police, MSD, Kainga ora, Oranga Tamariki and Public Health coming together to address barriers to supporting school aged tamariki engage in education across Lower Hutt.

Provide free health and wellbeing services

We will ensure that everyone can access health and wellbeing support, particularly Māori, Pasifika and low income residents. This includes through local initiatives like Karanga Manaaki, which provides essential free, nurse-led care for non-enrolled people, and Te Awakairangi Health Network, which offers free health wellbeing services to people enrolled in a practice. We will work collaboratively to increase GP enrolment, including exploring opportunities to reach unenrolled people through clinics in some Council facilities. We

will also focus on ensuring that immunisation coverage protects everyone.

Establish community health network

The two largest Primary Health Organisations (PHO) in the Wellington region, Te Awakairangi Health Network and Tū Ora Compass Health are joining forces to strengthen and standardise primary care delivery to almost 450,000 people living in the Hutt Valley and greater Wellington region. Known as Tū Ora, the new PHO will support the development a community health network – a collaboration of cross-sector partners and health providers with a shared focus on achieving equitable health outcomes.

Work collaboratively to prevent homelessness and support housing stability

HCC, mana whenua, central government agencies, housing providers, and social services organisations will continue to work in partnership to support access to emergency and transitional housing, advocate to increase housing supply, and support efforts to prevent eviction, overcrowding and rough sleeping. In 2024-25 Tākiri Mai te Ata, Tuatahi Centre, and Community Law – collectively supported over 400 whānau across the City. They will continue to focus on sustaining and securing tenancies to prevent homelessness.

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER
Address interlinked challenges through joined-up services, including establishing a community health network.	Health NZ, Te Awakairangi Health Network
Work collaboratively to prevent homelessness and support housing stability.	HCC, mana whenua

INITIATIVE 12

MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO ACCESS NUTRITIOUS FOOD CHOICES AND DESIGN OUR CITY FOR HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLES.

Food plays a central role in our lives – it brings family together and is one of the key ways we celebrate cultural traditions. But many people are struggling to access affordable, nutritious kai. We want to make good food accessible to all. That means making it easy for our tamariki, whānau and hāpori to grow, prepare and share healthy kai—while designing neighbourhoods that support activity and wellbeing every day.

Increase access to affordable, nutritious food

We will support initiatives that improve food security, reduce food waste and promote community-based food systems. This includes food banks, mara kai community gardens, fruit trees in public spaces, and healthy food policies in schools and public facilities. Local projects like Healthy Families planned ‘Cull to Plate’, can help provide equitable access to fresh, affordable and culturally relevant kai.

Design our city for movement and wellbeing

People are more likely to be active when the built environment supports it. We will continue to invest in walkable neighbourhoods, safe cycling networks, and easy access to parks, playgrounds and green spaces. Streetscapes, transport planning and urban design all play a role in shaping a city that supports wellbeing through everyday movement, which will be reflected in our revitalised city centre.

Make the healthy choice the easy choice

We will champion a city environment that make it easier to choose health—whether it’s the availability of water fountains in public spaces (such as water at the Dowse Square taps from the Waiwhetū aquifer) access to

shade and seating in parks, or healthy food options at public events and facilities. We will also promote local wellbeing campaigns, and education and community events that encourage healthy habits.

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER
Increase access to affordable, nutritious food.	HCC/Healthy Families
Design our city for movement and wellbeing, including in revitalised city centre.	HCC

INITIATIVE 9: SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LOOK AFTER THEIR HOLISTIC WELLBEING, TO STAY HEALTHIER FOR LONGER

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER	STATUS
Promote community-led health and wellbeing	Health New Zealand, Te Awakairangi Health Network	
Expand community based hubs, including kaupapa Māori hauora services.	Health New Zealand, Mana Whenua	
INDICATORS	LATEST DATA	TARGET
Positive rating of own physical health and wellbeing .	68% (Quality of Life 2024)	

INITIATIVE 10: DEVELOP LOWER HUTT AS A CENTRE OF HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE, ATTRACTING CLINICIANS TO LIVE AND PRACTICE HERE.

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER	STATUS
Invest in city healthcare infrastructure and services, including Sir Mark Dunajtschik Mental Health Centre.	Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora	Underway
Support training, development and career pathways.	Health New Zealand	
INDICATORS	LATEST DATA	TARGET
% of people enrolled with a GP		95%

INITIATIVE 11: PROVIDE WRAP AROUND SUPPORT FOR LOWER HUTT'S MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER	STATUS
Address interlinked challenges through joined-up services, including establishing a community health network.	Health NZ, Te Awakairangi Health Network	Ongoing
Work collaboratively to prevent homelessness and support housing stability.	HCC, Mana Whenua	
INDICATORS	LATEST DATA	TARGET
People experiencing homelessness in Lower Hutt	4,650 2023	<1,000

INITIATIVE 12: MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO ACCESS NUTRITIOUS FOOD CHOICES AND DESIGN OUR CITY FOR HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

STEPS TO GET THERE	OWNER	STATUS
Increase access to affordable, nutritious food.	HCC/Healthy Families	
Design our city for movement and wellbeing, including in revitalised city centre.	HCC	
INDICATORS	LATEST DATA	TARGET
People who have been physically active on at least 5 days in the past week	32% (2024 Quality of Life)	

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1

GROW AND COOK GOOD KAI. Pass knowledge through the generations about growing and cooking good food, with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

2

HAVE OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH. Normalise talking about mental health, what it is and how to work through issues together.

3

BE ACTIVE EVERYDAY. Walk, bike or scooter to school or work, stroll along the Hutt River Trail, or explore one of our city's amazing nature walks.

4

KEEP UP WITH IMMUNISATIONS. Make sure tamariki are up to date with their immunisations to protect them and whānau from diseases.