

10 September 2026

Hon David Seymour
Associate Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6011

Via email: D.Seymour@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister,

The Council of Medical Colleges | Te Kaunihera o Ngā Kāreti Rata o Aotearoa (CMC) is writing to you in your capacity as Associate Minister of Health to recommend a practical step to strengthen the quality, safety and professional support of assisted dying services in New Zealand: the establishment of a dedicated professional home for assisted dying practitioners.

CMC was prompted to look at the topic of assisted dying when a question was asked of the CMC about the guidance and expectations colleges provide for members who provide these services. We undertook a survey of members, and found that only limited guidance was being provided.

On 25 June, CMC hosted a workshop with representatives from all 18 specialist medical colleges, Dr Katie Benn (an assisted dying provider) and Michael Nestmann (Manager of the Community and Mental Health Autonomy Team at Te Whatu Ora). The workshop considered how the medical colleges can better provide guidance and support for doctors involved in assisted dying services.

The discussion was constructive and highlighted a shared concern that assisted dying currently lacks a clear professional structure to support safe, consistent and well-governed practice.

Introducing a professional home for assisted dying

After a fruitful discussion, colleges agreed that assisted dying services are similar to other pan-professional services that may only have a small number of participants from a range of colleges. The outcome from the workshop, and the recommendation we wish to emphasise, is that a professional home for assisted dying practitioners should be established. Such a body would sit alongside¹ or under SCENZ and would provide the clinical, educational and professional support needed to ensure the quality and safety of services. It would provide:

- a training framework (noting that the existing training framework focuses on the law, rather than the practice of assisted dying)
- continuing professional development (CPD) and accreditation relevant to their work
- clinical leadership and sector support
- oversight for assisted dying practitioners.

¹ SCENZ has legislative responsibilities in this space, so a law change may be needed if the body were to sit alongside rather than under.

Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)	College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand (CICM)	New Zealand College of Sexual and Reproductive Health (NZCSRH)	Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA)	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RANZCOG)	Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA)
Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians (ACSEP)	New Zealand College of Musculoskeletal Medicine (NZCMM)	Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)	Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP)
Australian and New Zealand College of Anesthetists (ANZCA)	New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM)	Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (RACDS)	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR)	Royal New Zealand College of Urgent Care (RNZCUC)

There are several possible models for where this professional home could sit. CMC's view is that a body similar to [MEDSAC](#) (Medical Sexual Assault Clinicians Aotearoa) would be the most appropriate model. Like sexual assault clinicians, assisted dying practitioners come from a range of clinical backgrounds and belong to different medical colleges. MEDSAC is an independent body that works across allied health professions and all medical specialties to provide clinicians with the skills and professional support needed to practise safely and professionally. A comparable body for assisted dying would fill a similar cross-specialty role.

CMC is also drafting a position statement on assisted dying that will support this central recommendation. The position statement is also intended to:

- make clear which specialties encompass the skills required to provide assisted dying services
- emphasise the importance of collegial relationships where a doctor is providing assisted dying services when this is outside of their training²
- set an expectation that doctors providing assisted dying services should be engaged in formalised and recorded continuing professional development (CPD) and accreditation relevant to their work
- require that doctors providing assisted dying services be in good standing with the Medical Council.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with you and officials in Te Whatu Ora to support the establishment of a professional home for assisted dying. We believe it would make an important contribution to the safety, consistency and professional governance of assisted dying services in New Zealand.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Michael Thorn at Michael.thorn@cmc.org.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Dr Samantha Murton

Chair
Council of Medical Colleges

² "Collegial relationships" are a tool of the Medical Council of New Zealand and provide a structured professional arrangement where a vocationally registered doctor supports a colleague to maintain competence and professional development, especially when practising outside their core scope.

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