

Talking points for Environmental Health Indicators New Zealand (EHINZ) 10-year anniversary speech

Wednesday 11/03/20
4:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Room 5FO&, Block 5
Massey university, Wellington

Introduction

Kia ora koutou

I am delighted to be here to mark this important milestone.

Before I start, I want to let you know that Ashley would have liked to have been here to celebrate with us, however, as you can imagine the response to COVID-19 is a key call on his time at the moment.

So I bring with me Ashley's best wishes and congratulations.

The milestone today reflects a lot of hard work, by dedicated people, over many years.

Ten years in fact. That's something to be rightly proud of and to celebrate.

I want to personally thank each of you on behalf of the Ministry. Your contribution, energy, and insights are evident in the quality of the work and value it provides to so many.

I would like to acknowledge Dr Barry Boreman and the wider leadership group, for their continued diligence, dedication, and drive in this valuable work for the system.

The indicators help us to understand our changing world

We are living in an ever-changing world. We see this in so many facets of our lives (and as a parent of teenagers I am keenly aware of this!)

Naturally, we want to understand and respond to changes in our environment. Access to high quality data - that's easy to use – is a key part of this.

That's where your work comes in.

The EHINZ's indicators monitor New Zealand's changing environmental health (which is an important part of the Ministry's statutory responsibilities).

The indicators span key elements that are fundamental to the wellbeing of our population.

A few examples include the quality of our air, our drinking water, harmful UV exposure from the sun, as well as transport and border health indicators.¹

Indicators are used for policy, planning and research

Having access to this data facilitates the Ministry's understanding of health risks for New Zealanders.

But not just the Ministry. And this is important. Having the indicators available at the 'click of mouse' makes this resource readily available to the sector, researchers and the general public.

This means your work contributes to policy advice, health planning and research. All of which is geared to creating better health and wellbeing.

EHINZ help us with our prevention and wellbeing focus

Various studies suggest a large proportion of our health (somewhere between 70-80%) is influenced by factors outside the health system.²

That's a big opportunity for prevention and population health improvement. This a key focus for me, the Ministry and sector.

Your work directly supports our focus and contributes to the Government's overall wellbeing approach.

I note your recent publication which shows we have the highest number motor vehicles ever. And the need for us to be mindful of the human health impacts this brings. For example via air pollution, crashes and accidents, climate change as well as through noise³.

¹ A set of 12 indicators, including air quality, climate change, drinking water, recreational water, transport, indoor environment, UV exposure, hazardous substances, border health, population vulnerability, children and animals and human health.

² Kings Fund work on health determinants, US research, and Canadian studies.

³ https://www.ehinz.ac.nz/assets/Factsheets/NumberMotorVehicles_released022020.pdf

These sorts of reports and their findings (or information for action) are important to the government and Ministry.

For example, Ashley's report to Parliament on the overall health of New Zealanders - incorporates environmental health indicators (such as UV exposure and air quality) alongside many other indicators – to help paint a picture of the health of our nation.⁴

It is in this context that I want to encourage you in your ongoing work. To know that it is an important resource. And to continue to hold the flag high for environmental health.

[Please continue to challenge us, we're up for it!]

Closing comments

In closing, I want to thank you again for your hard work.

The Ministry continues to value and invest in this important area of research for benefit of all New Zealanders.

And we always look forward to hearing about your work and progress on the indicators when you visit our teams at the Ministry.

I have been kindly invited to mark the occasion by cutting the first piece of one of the cakes.

I look forward to celebrating with you.

Nāku noa, nā

⁴ Health and Independence Report 2017 (published in 2018).