

7 January 2025

James Meager
Chair, Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

By email to: TreatyPrinciples@parliament.govt.nz

Submission on the Treaty Principles Bill

Tēnā koe James,

Te Whare Piki Ora o Māhutonga – the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. Our mission is *‘To improve access, equity, quality and delivery of surgical care that meets the needs of our diverse communities’*.

A strong focus on health advocacy is a central competency of a surgeon, and a core value of this College. We are committed to achieving a fair, safe and sustainable health system that delivers equitable access, equitable healthcare services, and equitable healthcare outcomes for Māori and for Pacific peoples consistent with the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022.

The RACS Māori Health Advisory Group (MHAG) provides advice and support to the College and has a programme of support for Māori surgical trainees working in New Zealand. The College has also made a commitment to Indigenous Health in both New Zealand and Australia. As chair of MHAG, I endorse the submission sent by Te Kaunihera o Ngā Kāreti o Aotearoa – the Council of Medical Colleges of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Earlier in the year, with Ben Cribb, Chair of RACS Indigenous Health Committee, I wrote to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, and coalition partners Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Winston Peters and Hon David Seymour to express our opposition to the Treaty Principles Bill, outlining our concerns that the Bill would undermine attempts to lift Māori Health outcomes through equity-based funding and health care. We received a reply from Hon David Seymour (see attached). In his reply he blames the judiciary for making up laws without consultation with the New Zealand public. Coincidentally, Hon Seymour is also the Associate Minister of Justice.

These criticisms were primarily aimed at local government Māori wards, the Māori and Pasifika Admission Scheme (MAPAS) at Auckland University Medical School and Kauae Parāoa programme at Otago University Medical School. Hon David Seymour is also the Associate Minister of Health, so it is disturbing to see that he is targeting programmes aimed at equitable health outcomes for Māori.

We wrote (see attached) to the Minister of Health; Hon Dr Shane Reti and Hon Penny Simmonds, Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills regarding the proposed review of MAPAS at The University of Auckland and Te Kauae Parāoa programme at Otago University. Māori made up 20% of enrolments at the university’s medical school over the last four years, reaching parity with European and Asian enrolments for the first



time¹. The letter concludes that by “prioritising diversity, cultural competence and a commitment to serving under-served populations, we can ensure a healthier, more inclusive future for all”.

We also cannot understand why the Bowel Screening project in the Waikato region has been scrapped, without regard for health inequities and evidence that Māori are dying much younger from preventable diseases such as Bowel Cancer².

A recent research project report³ found that Māori medical doctors have been exposed to consistent racism and discrimination during training and continue to experience these behaviours while working in New Zealand hospitals. These medical professionals are suffering from high burnout rates. We also know of surgeons who are unable to find permanent positions in New Zealand and may have to move overseas to find permanent work. The state of the healthcare system in New Zealand is fast deteriorating.

We implore the Government to scrap this Bill that is causing more outrage than necessary.

Nāku noa, nā

John Mutu-Grigg

Chair, Māori Health Advisory Committee

RACS represents more than 8300 surgeons and 1300 surgical Trainees and Specialist International Medical Graduates across Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. We are the accredited training provider in nine surgical specialities. Surgeons are also required by RACS and Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa - Medical Council of Aotearoa, to continue with surgical education and review of their practice throughout their surgical careers.

¹ [Who is getting into medical school and health courses? Study shows affirmative action's successes and failures - NZ Herald](#)

² [Govt ends pilot programme for Māori and Pacific, sparking outrage | RNZ News](#)

³ [Māori Medical Student and Physician Exposure to Racism, Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying - PubMed](#)