



The Royal Australasian  
College of Physicians

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Support for National Rehabilitation Strategy in New Zealand**

14 October 2015

The Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine and the New Zealand Rehabilitation Association today called for the immediate development of an all-inclusive New Zealand-wide rehabilitation strategy to improve patient outcomes and reduce preventable disability.

The joint call for action was made in Wellington today by the President of the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRM), Dr Stephen de Graaff and Clinical Head of Rehabilitation at Counties Manukau District Health Board, Dr Cynthia Bennett.

AFRM President, Dr de Graaff said there is now a consensus amongst health and political leaders that New Zealand is moving towards an unsustainable health and social support system.

“There are great disparities in rehabilitation services across the country and a national strategy is crucial to improving the health, wellbeing and functional abilities of New Zealanders who experience living with a disability.

“Through our research, we have identified that there is a major inadequacy and inequity of rehabilitation services across New Zealand and in the interests of our patients and the broader community, we would like to see this addressed as a matter of urgency.

Dr Cynthia Bennett said rehabilitation is such an integral component of healthcare, yet many New Zealanders have poor access to specialist rehabilitation.

“Our population is growing, as is the percentage of New Zealanders living with disability.

“There is substantial evidence that timely and skilled rehabilitation will ultimately lead to improved outcomes and that a coordinated approach to rehabilitation services in New Zealand will have a positive impact on the overall health budget,” Dr Bennett said.

The aims of the joint ‘Call for a New Zealand Rehabilitation Strategy’ are to:

- Guide policy and practice of healthcare for those with disability
- Improve the health, wellbeing and functional abilities of New Zealanders who experience disability from illness or injury
- Reduce the individual and whānau/family burden of impairment and disability
- Enhance functional ability and independence thus reducing the need for community support for personal care and societal cost of disability
- Improve participation outcomes and the ability to contribute to family, the community and the economy by encouraging return to life roles and work force participation
- Create equity in rehabilitation service accessibility and provision across New Zealand
- Promote leadership in healthcare and rehabilitation reform.

Access the [Call for a New Zealand Rehabilitation Strategy](#).

**ENDS**

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