

DHA Letter to the Incoming Minister of Health

Hon Simeon Brown

29 JANUARY 2025



DHA

Digital Health Association

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29 January 2025

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
Wellington
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Dear Minister Brown,

Re: Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Health

On behalf of the 200+ members of the [Digital Health Association](https://www.dha.org.nz), I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Health. Your leadership comes at a critical time for our health system, and we look forward to supporting your efforts to enhance the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

As you embark on this important journey, we would like to draw your attention to the critical role digital health technologies play in transforming healthcare delivery and ensuring New Zealand meets its health targets. The DHA is the peak advocacy and industry body for digital health in New

Zealand, representing a diverse membership that includes digital health companies, healthcare providers, and operational stakeholders. Through well-established partnerships across government and industry, we focus on advocacy, collaboration, and advancing policies that integrate digital health solutions to improve outcomes and help achieve national health targets. Digital health

technologies are already reshaping the healthcare landscape globally by making services more accessible, efficient, and patient-centred. These tools are vital for enabling equity in health outcomes, improving productivity, and ensuring timely delivery of care—key metrics tied to achieving health targets in areas such as chronic disease management, mental health, and preventative care. However, to realise the full potential of these technologies, it is crucial that

New Zealand invests in a robust digital health infrastructure. This includes creating an interoperable data ecosystem that supports secure, seamless information exchange across the health system. Such an ecosystem is foundational to both achieving health targets and ensuring the success of digital initiatives. Unfortunately, New Zealand is falling behind its global counterparts in digital health.

Ongoing underinvestment in this space is concerning, with nearly \$500 million in funding cuts since Budget 2024 and proposed staffing reductions affecting up to 47% of digital technology resources (vacancies and current roles). These actions risk undermining the progress made over the past five years and jeopardise any ability to meet the government's health and equity targets.

As you address immediate priorities, particularly budgetary concerns, we urge you to view digital health not as a cost but as an enabler. Digital health technologies are essential frontline tools that improve care delivery, drive efficiencies, and enhance patient outcomes. They provide the

data and insights necessary for measuring progress toward health targets while enabling a proactive, preventative approach to healthcare.

Attached is the Briefing to the Incoming Minister prepared for Dr Reti in late 2023, which remains highly relevant. We are also preparing a sector-wide briefing for you that will outline the current key challenges and opportunities within the digital health ecosystem, as well as practical solutions to support health system goals. We anticipate providing this briefing within the next month and hope to meet with you then to discuss these issues in detail.

With new leadership, there is a critical opportunity to establish a stronger network of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to drive meaningful health system improvements. Industry brings deep expertise and innovation that can significantly support the government in achieving its health goals. Better leveraging this expertise will accelerate the uptake of digital health, ensuring solutions are fit-for-purpose, scalable, and cost-effective. Now is the time to adopt a structured PPP framework that harnesses both government leadership and industry capability to deliver impactful and timely digital health advancements.

It is important to note that strengthening PPPs is distinct from privatising the health system. A well-designed partnership model ensures greater efficiency, innovation, and access to expertise, while maintaining a publicly funded, equitable health system that serves all New Zealanders.

In the meantime, I would also like to highlight our progress with Minister Doocey on hosting the Digital Mental Health Summit last December at Parliament, which was proposed in our initial briefing attached. This Summit has been an important step in addressing the mental health needs of New Zealanders through digital innovation and we are progressing discussions with the Minister.

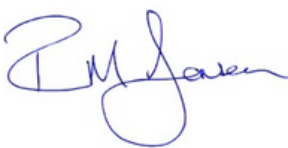
Digital health innovation is not just a forward-thinking approach, it is a necessity for improving outcomes, reducing costs, achieving efficiencies, enabling our health workforce and providing 21st century care to health consumers.

Continuing to invest in digital health innovation will ultimately lead to improved health outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, and enhanced patient experiences, all outcomes on which you are now focused.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further and collaborate with Health New Zealand to develop policies and strategies that support the growth and integration of digital health technologies.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to working together to create a healthier, digitally empowered future for all New Zealanders.

Yours sincerely,



Ryl Jensen | CEO
Digital Health Association