



**NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION OF
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Media Release

From: Multicultural New Zealand (MNZ)

15 October 2024

Media Release: Multicultural New Zealand Supports Minister Reti on Waikato Hospital Language Policy

Pancha Narayanan, President of the Multicultural New Zealand, welcomes Health Minister Shane Reti's stance on the use of non-English languages in Waikato Hospital. Multicultural New Zealand supports Minister Reti's stand that nurses speaking in multiple languages can enhance patient care, particularly in New Zealand's multicultural society.

Pancha Narayanan praised the Minister's acknowledgment of diversity and inclusiveness, noting that "linguistic diversity is a strength, not a barrier." He added, "We recognise the importance of patient safety and clear communication but believe that cultural competency, including the ability to converse in various languages, plays an essential role in healthcare. Multilingual staff not only ease communication but also provide comfort and build trust with patients from diverse backgrounds."

The Multicultural New Zealand offers its assistance to Waikato Hospital's management to support effective cultural communication strategies. "We are committed to helping enhance their understanding of the significance of language and cultural awareness in healthcare delivery. By collaborating, we can help develop policies that ensure patient safety without compromising inclusivity," Pancha Narayanan said.

Pancha Narayanan further stressed that New Zealand's official languages, Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language, should also be embraced in clinical settings. "We advocate for an approach that acknowledges New Zealand's multiculturalism and multilingualism while ensuring clinical safety. Our community is ready to assist with cultural training and support to foster an inclusive environment for both staff and patients."

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