

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, maintaining and improving the health of all members of the community must be the goal of any civilised society.

To reduce the number of New Zealanders on waiting lists for treatment in public hospitals, my Government will encourage competition between the public and private sector to provide publicly-funded hospital services. A White Paper will be produced on the reform of the Accident Compensation Corporation during the next 12 months.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the Government will implement reforms in the area of social welfare. Benefit assistance will be adjusted to recognise that people in different circumstances require different treatment from the welfare system.

The system will be designed to ensure that people in temporary difficulty look to their own resources for support before they look for social welfare. Those in need of short term support will be provided with temporary income and social services to assist them back to independence. New Zealanders who suffer from long term disadvantage due to disability will be entitled to security and certainty of welfare support.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, it is fitting that as New Zealand celebrates the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, my Government will be launching a fresh effort to address and resolve quickly all major outstanding Maori claims relating to that Treaty before another decade passes.

The Government is committed to measures that will promote greater educational and training development amongst Maori and foster the growth of a stronger economic base for Maori.

The Government will be consulting with the Pacific island communities in New Zealand on the future role and development of the new Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs.

My Government will pursue a constructive and supportive relationship with the island countries of the Pacific, recognising our place in the region and our special constitutional links with the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, my Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the special interests of women, of youth, and of senior citizens.