

## New Zealand Health Libraries Update

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This paper is part of an ongoing commissioned series on health library updates from around Australasia. Please note information was correct at the time of writing, but some time has elapsed between then and the article being published.

The New Zealand health library landscape is undergoing a far reaching and disruptive transformation. Following a lengthy consultation period the publicly funded New Zealand hospital network was restructured and a single national entity, Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora, created in 2022. The restructure brought together 20 separate hospital Boards into one entity with the aim of reducing duplication and enabling equity of access to services across New Zealand. During the consultation process the New Zealand Health Librarians Group prepared a submission outlining a vision for a single national health library service with a national approach to procurement and access and the creation of a single national library digital discovery platform. This proposal was accepted by the Executive Leadership Team and in September 2023 the new national health library service model came into being with the appointment of the first national Group Manager for Library and Knowledge Services, Peter Murgatroyd.

The new structure includes the appointment of three regional Team Leaders to provide leadership and support for the local Libraries that comprise the new national network.

A model of national procurement has been initiated to identify a national library collection that will be accessible to all employees of Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora via a single digital library portal commencing January 2025.

All current suppliers of library resources were asked to pro rata existing contracts and subscriptions with each of the former hospital district libraries so that they terminated on 31 December 2024.

Suppliers have been invited to submit expressions of interest and indicative pricing for their resources for consideration. Decisions on the new national collection will be made in October 2024 following the review of expressions of interest received from all suppliers. A new national digital library discovery platform will be launched in January 2025. The new platform will also include access to a suite of resources to support the knowledge needs of our primary and community care workforce.

More than just a new system for procurement and digital access, the new library embeds a national team structure. Projects have been initiated to create new processes for managing workflows and supporting service delivery across the organisation. Local lines of authority and financial delegation have been nationalised. Governance and financial and management responsibility for all aspects of the library service is under the leadership of the Group Manager, Library and Knowledge Services with support from the three Regional Team Leaders. The Library and Knowledge Services team is a portfolio within the Evidence, Research and Clinical Trials directorate.

Following a change in government in New Zealand in November 2023 and the appointment of a Health Commissioner to oversee more sweeping changes to the sector in July 2024, Health New Zealand is currently undergoing a period of budget austerity across the organisation with significant cuts signalled for both operating budgets and staffing levels. Within that context it is anticipated that the procurement budget for library resources will be constrained and that current and future vacancies that arise across the library team are likely to remain unfilled in the short/medium term. To this point no currently filled staff positions across the team have been disestablished and no libraries earmarked for closure. Nevertheless it has been an unsettling and difficult time for the wider library team navigating a period of unprecedented organisational change and it is a testament to their resilience, professionalism and commitment to their work that library services continue to be a beacon of excellence across the organisation.