



**Hato Hone
St John**

He Rautaki Waka Manaaki Ambulance Service Strategy

2025–2035



A person with short grey hair, seen from the back, wearing a white uniform, looks out of a window. Outside, a yellow and green Waka Emergency vehicle is parked on a street. The vehicle has 'WAKA' and 'EMERGENCY' written on its side. In the background, there are trees with yellow blossoms and a building with a red and white striped awning.

Meeting patient needs *into the future*

For over 140 years, Hato Hone St John has stood by communities across Aotearoa New Zealand, delivering emergency care when it's needed most.

Today, our Ambulance Service answers over 550,000 111 calls every year – reaching people in their homes, workplaces and schools, on roadsides, and in the most remote corners of the country. With a skilled and compassionate workforce, including thousands of dedicated volunteers, we provide high-quality emergency and urgent care that saves lives and supports the health and wellbeing of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We do more than just respond though – we contribute to a stronger, more resilient health system. Through enhanced triage processes, including treating more callers over the phone or at the scene and referring patients to the most appropriate services, we are more effectively managing demand, easing pressure on hospitals and improving patient outcomes. We also provide a diverse range of health transport and non-emergency paramedical support options to our partners and stakeholders. We're proud to deliver a service that is not only clinically excellent, but also

efficient, inclusive, and connected to the communities we serve.

The environment we operate in is constantly changing and we must adapt. More people are calling 111 and their needs are increasingly complex, some population groups continue to face barriers to care, the health workforce is under pressure, infrastructure needs renewal and there are opportunities for stronger integration with the health system.

Our organisational strategy, *Manaaki Ora*, sets our direction through to 2035. The Ambulance Service strategy sits alongside the Community Health strategy, showing how we contribute to *Manaaki Ora* and bring it to life – by strengthening our emergency response while evolving to meet the changing needs of patients and the health system.

We're committed to making a difference, every day – and ensuring that New Zealanders can continue to rely on us for generations to come.



Our role in *healthcare*

These are the main functions that the Ambulance Service delivers for people living in Aotearoa New Zealand:



Emergency response



Urgent care



Health transport

We do this by focusing on excellence in four key areas:



Triage and assessment of 111 calls for help

- › Prioritising patients based on urgency and clinical need
- › Minimising delays for time-critical emergencies
- › Effectively identifying patients who do not need an immediate ambulance response
- › Ensuring timely clinical assessments to allocate the right resources.



Optimal response, advice or referral

- › Immediately sending an ambulance response to patients with a life-threatening emergency
- › Responding in a different way for those who do not require an emergency ambulance, but still require urgent care
- › Where feasible and safe, referring or directing patients to more appropriate health or social services to better meet their needs
- › Coordination of ambulance service resources and efficient use of hospital destinations.



Contemporary and evidence-based care

- › Delivering high-quality, life-saving clinical interventions in the community in all environments and efficiently transporting patients to hospital in an emergency
- › Seamless integration with other healthcare providers to ensure continuity of care
- › Championing a culture of innovation and continuous improvement
- › Ensuring continuity of services during a disaster through emergency management planning and integration with allied emergency services.



Support for the wider health sector

- › Continued involvement in hospital or private patient transfers by ambulance and medical support at events
- › Designing models of care that place patients at the centre of an integrated health system
- › Advancing new initiatives to improve health outcomes.

Tā Tātou moemoeā – Our vision

Hato Hone St John's vision of 'enhanced health and wellbeing for all' aligns strongly with New Zealand's health strategy vision of Pae Ora – Healthy Futures for all New Zealanders.

Our vision for the Ambulance Service shows how we contribute and what the future looks like.

Ko te mana ora ōrite

Enhanced health and wellbeing for all

By 2035, we are recognised as a leader in emergency and urgent care for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, including crisis response and support. We are an integral part of our country's health and emergency response systems.

Our patient and whānau- | family-centred approach to care upholds Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensures the delivery of equitable services for tāngata Māori and all communities that have been historically underserved by the health system.

We have established innovative models of care through collaboration with iwi Māori and an integrated approach with hauora | health and social care providers to support coordinated system change to meet the needs of all communities.

Leveraging data and analytics, we have embedded a culture of continuous quality improvement, prioritising resource optimisation, improved patient outcomes, and health equity.

Our people are the foundation of our service. We value their contribution and are committed to protecting their health, safety, and wellbeing. Our culture of learning and inclusivity fosters a strong sense of belonging, enabling our diverse workforce to thrive. We focus on growth and development and empower our people to deliver excellent, evidence-based care through innovative clinical pathways.



Tā tātou whāinga – Our purpose

To deliver equitable, high-quality emergency response, urgent care and health transport, ensuring people across Aotearoa New Zealand receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.



Bringing our strategic aims *To life*

To successfully deliver our organisational strategy, *Manaaki Ora*, we are guided by five strategic aims that shape our direction and decisions.

We bring these aims to life every day for the Ambulance Service – through the critical care we provide, the way we connect patients to the wider health system, our commitment to continuous improvement and *ōrite* | equity, and by nurturing a culture where our people feel valued, supported and inspired to make a difference.

Here is how our mahi | work contributes to each aim:



Improving health for all through excellent care and services

Leading in emergency response. We deliver rapid, high-quality care that saves lives.

Timely urgent care. When people have urgent health needs, but they can't access care elsewhere, we can help.

Championing equity and access. We're doing what we can to reduce differences in access, experience and outcomes for everyone.

Delivering safe, high-quality care. Sound clinical governance and a positive safety culture help us to provide a positive patient experience, learn and improve.

Improving health through innovation. We use clinical tools and technology to deliver timely, community-based care that eases pressure on hospitals.



Committing to equity for Māori

Embedding Te Tiriti in care. We honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by delivering equitable, culturally safe services that reflect manaakitanga – showing respect, generosity and care for others – and uphold the aspirations and needs of Māori.

Closing the equity gap. Monitoring performance and outcomes by ethnicity enables us to identify inequities and make service improvements to enhance the mana | spirit and hauora of tāngata Māori.

Strengthening cultural confidence. Empowering our kaimahi | workforce with knowledge and understanding builds confidence to connect with Māori in a way that is culturally grounded, respectful, and holistic.

Building strong partnerships. By designing services with Māori, grounded in tikanga | custom, respect, and mana motuhake | self-determination, we uphold rangatiratanga | chieftainship and support long-term improvements in health outcomes.

Growing a workforce that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand. We're committed to building a diverse and culturally grounded workforce that truly represents and understands the communities we serve.



Partnering for greater impact

Collaborating for patient outcomes. We work together with iwi Māori, health providers and social services to deliver more coordinated, patient-centred care.

Timely access to the right care. Not every patient needs an emergency department. Early identification, referrals and partnerships with other healthcare providers who can also respond to low acuity calls, help people to get the care they need and reduce hospital visits.

Working together for greater impact. Our Ambulance and Community Health services are focusing on shared priorities like cardiac arrest survival, equity for Māori and falls.

Coordinated crisis response. Through regular collaboration with emergency and health system partners, we strengthen our collective readiness and ensure a unified approach to major incidents.



Empowering our people to thrive

Working side by side with shared purpose. We recognise and value the complementary contributions of volunteers and paid personnel.

Prioritising health, safety and wellbeing. We put people first and make sure our staff and volunteers stay safe, well, and confident in their mahi. We create space for open kōrero | conversation.

Developing our people. Everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential. We build clinical excellence through training, and support clinicians to grow and improve by using feedback and performance insights to learn from experience.

Practising positive leadership. We stay meaningfully connected with our kaimahi, leading with empathy, inviting contribution and celebrating success.

Enabling access to the right tools. Timely access to health records and decision-making tools helps our clinicians deliver the safest, most effective care.



Achieving financial and operational sustainability

Delivering safe and effective operational excellence for the long term. Strong governance, sustainable funding, and infrastructure keep our services running – today and into the future.

Championing environmental sustainability. We're reducing our carbon footprint by adopting more sustainable practices and responsible resource use.

Building a resilient workforce. We are focused on building a pipeline of skilled health professionals ready to meet the future needs of the ambulance service.



Working as one

Our *shared goals*

We are united by our vision of ‘enhanced health and wellbeing for all’. We’re also stronger and more impactful when we work side by side – across our teams at Hato Hone St John and in partnership with others. To help achieve our vision, we’ll focus on two areas where we know that together we can make a greater difference.



Cardiac arrest survival

In Aotearoa New Zealand only 11% of people who experience cardiac arrest in the community survive. Ensuring more whānau are reunited with loved ones is one of the most immediate and life-saving ways we can make an impact.

Every minute counts. By strengthening our chain of survival – from increasing community awareness and growing bystander CPR and defibrillator use, to rapid response and clinical excellence – we can play our part in helping more New Zealanders to survive. Across Hato Hone St John, and working closely with communities and partners, we’ll improve systems, training, and access to lifesaving care.



Falls prevention and response

Falls are a leading cause of injury and loss of independence, especially for older people. As our population ages, more people are calling 111 for a fall – around 50,000 New Zealanders a year, nearly 10% of calls we respond to.

Across both ambulance and community health, we connect with thousands of older people every day – from monitoring medical alarms for over 60,000 customers, to completing more than 90,000 trips a year to health appointments and offering regular phone contact through our Caring Caller service.

Together, we can reduce harm from falls by combining prevention and response – supporting people to stay safe, well, and active in the community through health education, access, and monitoring, and ensuring they get the right care if they do fall.

The Ambulance Service in 2035

By 2035 we will ...

- 1 Optimise triage to improve patient outcomes
- 2 Refer to other health and social care providers at the earliest opportunity
- 3 Have a diverse range of internal and external response options
- 4 Assess patients holistically, enabled by new diagnostic approaches
- 5 Provide contemporary, and evidence-based care
- 6 Champion continuous improvement and dynamic decision-making
- 7 Support stakeholders through health transport and non-emergency paramedical services

**... to ensure our patients receive the right care,
in the right place, at the right time.**



How we will *achieve this*

1 Optimise triage to improve patient outcomes

What will change by 2035

By 2035, we will enhance our triage systems using technology, inclusive processes, and clinical expertise. This includes integrating multilingual support, culturally safe approaches, and a broader range of care pathways. Enhanced multidisciplinary secondary triage will help ensure timely, accurate decisions so patients are guided to the right care from the start – whether that means dispatching an ambulance or connecting them to other care options.

Why this matters

Improving how we assess 111 calls – both at the first point of contact and through follow-up and clinical review – means we can better distinguish between life-threatening emergencies and less urgent cases. This ensures emergency resources are available when they're needed most and supports better health outcomes for all patients, while reducing pressure on our hospitals.

What success will look like

- › New systems are implemented that redirect patients with primary healthcare problems to other providers before the call is presented to ambulance.
- › Life-threatening emergencies are quickly and accurately identified and prioritised for the fastest response.
- › Non-English speaking callers report improved access and satisfaction due to multilingual triage and assessment
- › Secondary triage uses greater clinical depth and expertise to support highly accurate decision-making.

2 Refer to other health and social care providers at the earliest opportunity

What will change by 2035

Following triage and assessment, not everyone who calls 111 needs an ambulance or hospital care. As a key entry point to the wider health and social care system, we will play a greater role in connecting patients early to the services that best meet their needs – whether that's primary care, community health or social support.

To support this, we'll strengthen relationships with health and social service partners and improve our referral systems. A comprehensive and up-to-date digital service directory will help our teams make faster, better informed and more seamless referral decisions. This will ensure that every person receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Why this matters

Helping patients access the right care and support sooner ensures their overall health and social needs are met more effectively. It can reduce unnecessary ambulance transports and hospital visits, improve health outcomes, and relieve pressure on both the ambulance service and the wider health system.

What success will look like

- › Patients who do not need an ambulance are safely, quickly and seamlessly redirected to the most appropriate alternative care, avoiding unnecessary transport to the emergency department or hospital.
- › Referral pathways are well understood and used confidently and consistently by frontline teams.
- › Frequent and repeat callers receive early support, helping to prevent issues from escalating.
- › Patients continue to report high satisfaction with how timely and relevant their care is.



Emergency care in 2035

Michael's story

It's a regular morning when Michael collapses in his living room. His wife dials 111 and the call handler uses AI-assisted technology to quickly recognise that Michael is in cardiac arrest. Calmly they guide her through CPR over a video call, helping her do everything she can while ambulance and fire teams are sent to the house.

Nearby community responders, alerted through the GoodSAM app, arrive within minutes carrying compact, ultra-portable defibrillators. They're supported remotely by a clinician via video link, providing real-time guidance until ambulance crews arrive.

The ambulance team works seamlessly with fire responders. Their CPR technique is precise and coordinated – skills they regularly practise together.

Thanks to exceptional teamwork and choreographed resuscitation, Michael's heart is soon beating again.

On the way to hospital, the ambulance team connects with an on-call doctor by video for clinical advice. A live link to Michael's vital signs is sent ahead to the hospital, so staff are fully prepared when he arrives.

Afterwards, clinical data from the monitor is automatically downloaded for review. Michael's case contributes to a national research study on advanced defibrillation, and all the teams involved receive feedback to support continuous learning. The ambulance crew can also check Michael's progress in hospital through the national electronic health record.

Michael makes a normal recovery and returns home to his family – grateful for the care, speed, and teamwork that saved his life.

3 Have a diverse range of internal and external response options

What will change by 2035

Every patient's needs are unique and so should be the response that they receive. To meet the needs of Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse communities, we will expand our network of care through both the capability of our own teams and trusted external partners. Whether it's specialist paramedics for high-acuity or complex incidents, paramedic-level emergency ambulances, trained community responders, or partner health and social care providers supporting lower-acuity cases, we will match the right type and level of response to each patient's needs and situation. This ensures ambulances are only dispatched when necessary.

Why this matters

This flexible, sustainable and integrated approach will help us manage ambulance demand more effectively, improve the patient experience, and ensure equitable access to timely care. Innovative models of care will be especially important for rural and remote communities, helping us overcome geographic barriers and extend high-quality out-of-hospital care across the motu | country.

What success will look like

- › Patients receive tailored care from the most appropriate responder, whether hospital or community based.
- › Rural and remote patients report improved access to urgent care in the community, without unnecessary travel.
- › Stronger partnerships with community and other health and social care providers improves system resilience and streamlines patient journeys.
- › Alternative response options reduce pressure on the emergency ambulance service and emergency departments while keeping patients safe.

4 Assess patients holistically, enabled by new diagnostic approaches

What will change by 2035

We will broaden how we assess patients, looking beyond their immediate health issue to consider social, cultural, and environmental factors when it is safe and appropriate to do so. New diagnostic tools and technology – including point-of-care testing and real-time remote monitoring – will support more accurate, timely decisions regarding treatment, referral, patient destination and transport.

Our people will be supported to understand our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and work in partnership with tāngata whenua, people who are descendants of our land, and community networks, ensuring care respects each person's values, circumstances, and aspirations.

Why this matters

With modern diagnostic tools and a commitment to culturally safe, equity-focused care, our frontline ambulance personnel will be empowered to make better-informed, patient-centred decisions at the scene. This approach ensures assessments are both clinically robust and culturally respectful – ultimately improving outcomes both immediately and over the long term.

What success will look like

- › On-scene diagnostic tools enable faster, more accurate and patient-centred decisions about care, treatment and transport.
- › Patient assessments routinely consider social, cultural and environmental factors.
- › Tāngata Māori experience culturally safe and responsive care that reflects Te Tiriti principles, improves outcomes and builds trust in our services.
- › More patients are referred appropriately, based on a fuller understanding of their overall health and wellbeing needs.

5 Provide contemporary, evidence-based care

What will change by 2035

Every patient has the right to care that meets the standards set out in the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, reflecting the latest research, best practice and innovations in care.

Our kaimahi will have the tools, training, and support they need to deliver high-quality, evidence-based care – from the first 111 call through to seamless handover to hospitals, specialist services or community providers. This includes access to new technology, continually updated clinical practice guidelines, and ongoing education to ensure our practice stays at the forefront of care.

Why this matters

By embedding evidence and innovation into everything we do, we'll improve patient outcomes, strengthen whānau trust, and enhance professional confidence in our workforce – ensuring safe, continuous care at every step of the patient journey.

What success will look like

- › Patients consistently receive care grounded in the latest clinical evidence and best practices.
- › Paramedic practice is informed by relevant and up-to-date continuous education and professional development.
- › Transitions between care providers are seamless, reducing duplication and improving continuity for patients.
- › Patients and whānau feel informed, supported, and satisfied with their care experience, which is reflected in feedback.

6 Champion continuous improvement and dynamic decision-making

What will change by 2035

In a fast-changing health environment, we will continuously evolve how we deliver care. Every patient interaction is a chance to learn and improve. By actively listening to patients and whānau, and using real-time data, information from our crews, predictive tools and sector partnerships, we'll adapt our services to better meet the needs of people across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Using data-driven insights, we'll respond quickly to emerging challenges and address issues before they escalate – ensuring every patient benefits from a service that is flexible enough to meet their changing needs.

Why this matters

A strong learning culture helps us respond quickly to changing needs, improve how we work, and deliver care that keeps pace with the wider health system and the communities we serve.

What success will look like

- › Ambulance personnel use real-time data to make better decisions and adapt quickly to changes in demand or patient needs.
- › Service improvements are shaped by patient feedback and emerging health trends.
- › Quality and safety indicators show reduced delays, fewer transfers of care, and better health outcomes.



Non-urgent care in 2035

Mairangi's story

Mairangi wakes with a painful, swollen leg that feels warm to the touch. Worried it might be something serious, she calls 111. The call handler carefully asks a few key questions and reassures her – it's not life-threatening. A clinician will be in touch shortly.

Within 20 minutes, Mairangi is being thoroughly assessed in te reo Māori by a clinician, over secure video on her mobile. The clinician confirms it's a localised infection – uncomfortable, but stable and safe to manage at home.

During the kōrero, Mairangi shares that she's struggling at home. She's living alone, doesn't have transport, and has been feeling increasingly isolated from her whānau. The clinician listens carefully, taking the time to understand what support might help beyond just the infection.

After the call, the clinician refers Mairangi to her GP and a local hauora Māori navigator to coordinate a whānau-centred care plan tailored to her needs:

- › Her antibiotics are prescribed electronically and delivered to her door that afternoon
- › A trusted at-home support service is arranged to help with daily tasks
- › The local iwi hauora team provides kanohi ki te kanohi | face-to-face connection and support
- › Mairangi is linked with Hato Hone St John's Caring Caller programme for regular friendly chats, and a medical alarm is organised for peace of mind.

Everything is updated in Mairangi's shared electronic health record in real time so her GP and care team stay connected and informed.

Mairangi remains in the comfort of her own home, supported holistically with wraparound care grounded in kaupapa Māori values. She feels heard, supported and connected – with her health, her culture and her community.

7 Support stakeholders through health transport and non-emergency paramedical services

What will change by 2035

Not every healthcare journey begins with an emergency. We will strengthen our planned health transport for non-urgent care, Event Health Services, and paramedic support for allied health providers to offer safe, reliable and efficient options that help keep people connected to the care they need.

By providing the right level of clinical support through these services, we'll improve patient experience and enhance efficiency across the wider health system.

Why this matters

These services are an essential part of the care pathway and wider health system. They help patients access timely support while ensuring emergency ambulance resources remain available for those who need them most.

What success will look like

- › Patients using patient transport services arrive safely, on time and feel supported throughout.
- › Partners such as aged care providers, primary care, hospitals, and event organisers report high confidence in the reliability and professionalism of our services.
- › Non-emergency paramedic services operate efficiently and ease pressure on frontline emergency teams. This indirectly benefits patients needing urgent, immediate care.
- › We continue to hold a strong portion of event health market share, delivering a margin that supports new health initiatives.
- › Integrated approaches to rural ambulance and primary care improve access to urgent care and service sustainability.

Our delivery plan

Our ambulance service provides both emergency, non-emergency and bespoke contracted services across the motu, meeting the requirements of our purchasers (Health New Zealand and ACC), customers and stakeholders.

The strategy has been developed following extensive consultation with these groups, while considering the views of our people, patients, communities and local hapū. This document will be regularly updated and a plan will be released annually to articulate the work we are doing to achieve our strategic ambitions, consistent with our Crown and private contract arrangements.



Foundations for *delivery*

These essential elements support us to successfully implement our strategy and deliver our ten-year vision.

We are part of a much greater health, emergency and social system and we can't do it alone. The contribution of our people, the support of our wider Hato Hone St John whānau, the strength of our communities, and the commitment of our partners, government and donors are all vital to making a lasting difference.



People and engagement

Our kaimahi are the backbone of the Ambulance Service. A skilled, supported, and inclusive workforce enables us to deliver excellent care and patient experience.



Partnerships and community connection

Strong local and national partnerships help us respond effectively and collaborate to meet the needs of patients and communities.



Cultural competency and Māori collaboration

Embedding Te Tiriti and strengthening Māori partnerships ensures our services are safe, equitable, and culturally responsive.



Finance and funding

Sustainable funding allows us to meet demand, invest in what matters, and plan for long-term growth.



Assets and technology

Fit-for-purpose stations and vehicles and smart technology ensure our people can deliver safe, effective and modern services.



Excellence and innovation

A focus on safety, quality, and continuous improvement drives better outcomes and helps us adapt to a changing health system.

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