

The New Zealand Sexual Health Society condemns the decision made by the coalition government of Aotearoa, New Zealand to ban the use of GnRH agonists (puberty blockers) for transgender children and adolescents. This political decision did not consider the views of transgender people, the needs and opinions of families and support people of transgender children and adolescents, or the advice of clinicians involved in the provision of gender affirming healthcare. The Ministry of Health briefing paper on the 'use of puberty blockers in gender-affirming care' states that, clinicians who initiate puberty blockers should be experienced in providing gender-affirming care and be part of an interprofessional team. This advice ensures a clinically rigorous and safe environment for both clinicians and patients and is current best practice in Aotearoa, New Zealand. GnRH agonists have been used in a variety of clinical settings, including use in children, for approximately 20 years and the safety record of these medications is well established. The harm of removing access to this medication for trans people has not been considered. Healthcare decisions should be made in consultation with the communities accessing care and follow national guidelines and the advice provided by expert clinicians.

It is unprecedented in this country for politicians to involve themselves in medicine regulation and to decide to ban access to a medication for one group of people and yet continue to allow free access to the same medication for all other groups of people. This decision directly contravenes Right 2 of the Health and Disability Patient Code of Rights and sets a dangerous precedent. Access to healthcare free from discrimination is a human right and Aotearoa, New Zealand has an obligation to the World Health Organisation to provide a health care system free from discrimination. We call for this ban to be reversed at the earliest opportunity.