

Children's health

Health camps

By the late 1940s all New Zealand children had a medical examination on entering school, and were seen by a nurse at standards two and six. These examinations helped identify those who were not 'thriving' in their home environment. Malnourished children were sent to state-supported children's health camps, where they received health care and education. While these camps had been in existence since the early 20th century, they were mainly temporary and did not come under state control until 1938.

Permanent health camps were then set up in the 1940s and 1950s, notably in Ōtaki, Pakuranga, Glenelg and Roxburgh. A key figure in their development was the Director of School Hygiene and later Deputy Director-General of Health, Dr H.B. Turbott.

Preventative health care

The polio epidemic of 1947 forced the closure of all North Island schools for over four months. Such epidemics underlined the need for preventative health care for children. In 1948 the Tuberculosis Act introduced measures for control of tuberculosis, and in 1956 the Salk polio vaccine was made available. From 1947 visits to dentists or dental clinics every two years for all children up to the age of 16 were provided.

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