

# Finding Balance

## Ethical principles for epidemics and pandemics

NATIONAL ETHICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE | KĀHUI MATATIKA O TE MOTU



## Executive summary

The frequency of epidemics and pandemics<sup>1,2</sup> is increasing. The NEAC has prepared *Finding Balance: Ethical principles for epidemics and pandemics* (*Finding Balance*) to guide the Minister of Health and key decision makers across the health and disability system to make ethical decisions during pandemics. The principles for pandemics described in *Finding Balance* (the Balance Principles) underpin how everyone can work together to plan for, respond to and recover from future pandemics. However, while they offer a shared basis for decision-making, they do not specify exact courses of action.

The Balance Principles (which are explained in full in chapter 2.1) are underpinned by the principles of human rights and equity, Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi and the attitudes and values of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. They can be summarised as the following.

- **Manaakitanga** – Responding in ways that are intentioned and respectful and demonstrate caring for others; establishing mutually beneficial communication and collaboration pathways.
- **Tika** – Responding in ways that are ‘right’ and ‘good’ for a particular situation by being open and transparent; cultivating trust between decision makers and the people impacted by their decisions.
- **Liberty** – Responding in ways that uphold human rights, including liberties and privacy.
- **Equity** – Responding in ways that eliminate or reduce unjust inequities in health outcomes for different groups of people and achieve healthy futures for all (pae ora).
- **Kotahitanga** – Responding in ways that strengthen social cohesion by empowering local government, leaders and communities (including iwi, hapū and other Māori groups) to be active participants in planning and responding to pandemics.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term ‘pandemic’ refers to both epidemics and pandemics.

<sup>2</sup> While the focus of this document is on infectious large-scale disease outbreaks that require fast decision-making, many of the recommended approaches and decision-making tools will also apply to non-infectious epidemics, such as obesity and drug abuse, as well as to other types of large-scale emergency.