ANZCA
FPM

Te Whare Tohu o
Te Hau Whakaora

Election Manifesto 2026

Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
& Faculty of Pain Medicine

2026 Election Manifesto

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), including the Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) and the Chapter of Perioperative Medicine, is responsible for the training, accreditation, robust standards, and ongoing support of anaesthetists and specialist pain medicine physicians in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our trainees are the future workforce that will sustain safe anaesthesia, pain services and perioperative care across the motu, putting patients at the heart of everything we do and delivering safe, evidence-based care when it matters most.

Ahead of the next general election, ANZCA and FPM call on all political parties and candidates to commit to evidence-based policies that secure a strong, sustainable anaesthesia and pain medicine workforce for New Zealand, strengthen perioperative and pain services and protect the wellbeing of our specialist doctors and trainees.

PRIORITY 1: HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEM DESIGN

Anaesthetists and specialist pain medicine physicians provide whole-of-system insight across surgical pathways, perioperative care, critical care, procedural sedation and pain services, and are uniquely placed to advise on safe, efficient models of care.

The next Government should:

- Develop long-term health workforce projections that account for current and future population health needs, equitable access and regional and rural distribution, and tie training numbers, immigration settings and retention strategies to these projections.
- Formally include ANZCA and FPM in development and implementation of policy that affects surgical capacity, perioperative pathways, pain services, ACC-funded services, community-based pain care and relevant workforce and training environments.
- Establish structured clinical advisory mechanisms that include trainee representation to provide timely, practical advice across regions and subspecialties.
- Develop transparent public–private collaboration frameworks for surgery, anaesthesia and pain services that ensure decisions about anaesthesia and pain interventions are led by appropriately qualified specialists, while ensuring patient safety, protecting the training environment and supporting supervised trainee exposure to a full range of cases.
- Ensure evidence-based, interdisciplinary models of care with specialist pain medicine physician clinical leadership are available in the private (health insurance), ACC and non-government organisation sectors.

PRIORITY 2: MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN HIGH STANDARDS OF ANAESTHESIA, SEDATION AND TRAINING

New Zealand is among the safest places in the world to receive an anaesthetic or deep sedation, but this depends on sustained investment in specialist training pathways, regulated scopes of practice, and robust accreditation requirements.

The next Government should:

- Protect ANZCA standards for anaesthesia and procedural sedation in all settings, ensuring deep sedation and complex analgesia are delivered or supervised by appropriately trained specialists.
- Use ANZCA's binational governance, training and quality frameworks to inform New Zealand standards, credentialing and safety requirements for anaesthesia, sedation and pain medicine.
- Develop a national blueprint for the introduction of new or extended roles (including non-medical sedation providers) that is collaborative and complementary, and explicitly protects patient safety, standards of care and the training environment.

PRIORITY 3: MAKE ANAESTHESIA AND PAIN MEDICINE CAREERS ATTRACTIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND CULTURALLY SAFE

A stable, supported workforce – including trainees – is central to safe anaesthesia and effective pain care. Equity and cultural safety must underpin anaesthesia, pain and perioperative services in Aotearoa New Zealand, consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and national health priorities.

The next Government should:

- Fund national initiatives that improve retention, wellbeing and cultural safety for anaesthetists, specialist pain medicine physicians and trainees, embedding these as core system requirements.
- Ensure all policy and planning relating to anaesthesia and pain medicine is Tiriti-responsive, co-designed with Māori partners and aligned with equity objectives for Māori and Pasifika.
- Resource cultural safety education and quality improvement across anaesthesia and pain services, including structured support for trainee learning, reflection and advocacy.
- Support targeted programs to increase Māori and Pasifika participation in anaesthesia and pain medicine training, building a workforce that reflects and understands the communities it serves.

PRIORITY 4: SECURE A STRONG TRAINING PIPELINE AND PROTECT TRAINEE WELFARE

A robust, well-planned training pipeline is essential to maintain safe anaesthesia, critical care and pain services across New Zealand, particularly in smaller and rural/remote communities. Trainees' welfare and educational experience directly influence patient safety and future workforce sustainability.

The next Government should:

- Increase and appropriately distribute funded anaesthesia and pain medicine training positions across regions, ensuring all parts of the motu can access specialist services.
- Align medical school, prevocational and vocational training pathways so anaesthesia and pain medicine remain attractive and accessible career choices for high-calibre graduates, including Māori and Pasifika doctors.
- Require health services to provide safe, well-resourced training environments that meet ANZCA and FPM accreditation standards.
- Support policies ensuring safe working hours, adequate rest, and access to leave for trainees, alongside protected time for education, simulation, supervision and reflection.

PRIORITY 5: INCREASE ACCESS TO PAIN SERVICES WHILE REDUCING THE BURDEN OF PAIN THROUGH SYSTEM-LEVEL REFORM

Pain medicine remains under-recognised and under-resourced in Aotearoa New Zealand, despite the substantial impacts pain has on individuals, whānau and society. Chronic pain affects more than one in four adults in Aotearoa New Zealand and represents a significant contributor to health system demand, disability and lost productivity. In the 2024/25 New Zealand Health Survey, 27.5 per cent of adults reported experiencing chronic pain.

Chronic pain should be recognised as a significant long-term health condition requiring coordinated, multidisciplinary and sustainable service responses.

The next Government should:

- Adopt a national pain strategy that prioritises prevention, early intervention and integrated models of care across community, regional and tertiary services, including reducing transition from acute to persistent pain, supporting self-management and improving coordination between primary, community and specialist services.
- Recognise the economic and social burden of acute and chronic pain on the health system, productivity and ACC, and resource pain services accordingly.
- Fund community-based chronic pain services using patient-centered, specialist pain medicine physician-led interdisciplinary models that include adequately trained medical and allied health staff and provide high-quality learning environments for pain medicine trainees.
- Address the shortage of specialist pain medicine physicians by increasing the number of accredited pain medicine training sites with strong regional services and explicit support for trainee supervision and development.
- Invest in national data collections, outcomes measurement and research infrastructure to better understand the burden of pain, monitor service performance and inform future workforce and service planning.
- Support innovative regional and rural pain care models, including telehealth, outreach services and regional training pathways.
- Support implementation of evidence-based pain management education across undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development programs to improve workforce capability, promote earlier intervention and reduce unwarranted variation in care.

PRIORITY 6: ELEVATE PERIOPERATIVE MEDICINE AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR QUALITY, EFFICIENCY AND TRAINING

Some of the greatest opportunities to improve outcomes for surgical patients and reduce costs lies in the pre- and post-operative phases of the perioperative journey, where perioperative teams can identify risk, optimise patient pathways and prevent complications.

The next Government should:

- Recognise perioperative medicine as a strategic focus within system planning, with ANZCA's Chapter of Perioperative Medicine guiding standards, training and implementation.
- Support a national roll-out of proven perioperative care models, and ensure trainees gain experience in comprehensive perioperative assessment, optimisation and shared decision-making.
- Fund perioperative services that address high-risk and high-needs populations, including Māori, Pasifika, the elderly, rural communities and people with multiple long-term conditions, and ensure health systems understand and can respond to these equity challenges.
- Invest in data and digital infrastructure to monitor perioperative outcomes, support research and provide Chapter of Perioperative Medicine course participants with exposure to quality improvement and system-level learning.

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New Zealand National Committee
Level 7, 5 Willeston Street, Wellington 6011
PO Box 25506, Wellington 6140 New Zealand