Statement by Emma Rawson-Te Patu, President-elect of the World Federation of Public Health Associations and Director of ManuKahu Associates Limited, 11 October 2023

Are health issues prominent in the NZ election campaign? If so, what health issues are being talked about?
Generally what we are seeing is a focus on whether the new Maori Health Authority – Te Aka Whai Ora will continue to exist if there is a change of government. In terms of parties focus it seems to be generally on healthcare and not on public health.

If not, why not?
With the focus on the health authority the typical divisive race baiting electioneering is at the forefront calling it separatism and race based (negatively) funding approaches. This takes the focus off actually addressing the actual health needs and system failures etc. This also feeds into the publics and the politicians general lack of understanding about the upstream determinants of health and how we need to move as a nation to address those.

Are climate and health concerns prominent?
If you mean are they drawing the connection from planetary health and human health and the importance of one needing the other then no. The focus is the cost of living and the economy.

What are the key health issues at stake for Maori people and health organisations?
Health System design, resource distribution and workforce capacity. Mental Health, Housing, Food Security, Drugs as a health issue not a justice issue, Water quality and Water sovereignty

Are disease prevention and health promotion being talked about? If so, in what way?
Not prominently. The peripheral issues continue to be cost of living, water quality, mental health services and oral health, transport, housing. Mainstream media and politicians tend to address mainly from a sectorial rather than public health perspective.