

PRESS RELEASE- New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists

NZ Clinical Psychologists say: “Work with us if you want to make health reform a success”

The New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists welcomes the significant reforms to the New Zealand Health and Disability system, recently announced by Minister Andrew Little. It is clear that the system, as it currently exists, has led to significant levels of inequity and poor outcomes for Māori, people with disabilities and those living in rural communities.

The College recognises that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-design the services to which Clinical Psychologists are likely to be central. Clinical Psychologists are experts in mental health care, particularly psychological therapies, and in the diagnosis and support of people with disabilities. In recent times, it has become increasingly clear that those systems are poorly designed and unable to cope with the demand. New ideas and strong leadership are sorely needed to make the system work effectively for all New Zealanders.

The Simpson report was explicit in noting that the health system “*will not be successful unless the workforce is planned and managed more effectively*” and called for better collaboration between policy makers across Health and Education. In this context, New Zealand is currently experiencing a **severe** and **chronic** shortage of Clinical Psychologists. New Zealand does not currently train sufficient numbers of clinical psychologists and healthcare providers have therefore tended to rely heavily on recruitment from overseas, which has significant implications for the cultural responsiveness of the profession. Following the findings of the He Ara Oranga inquiry, as well as the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe this approach is clearly unsustainable and requires urgent redesign.

Kua horahia te takapau wharanui

(the foundation for fulfilment of our collective aspirations has been set in place)

Te rerenga o te kōrero ki te ao mārama

(the narrative flow has created a pathway towards greater clarity and understanding)

In keeping with this karakia, composed by Prof Meihana Durie, the College believes that clinical psychology can offer the Ministry a number of concrete solutions to help end the crisis in the mental health system- including ways to boost the Clinical Psychology workforce and increase the availability of evidence-based psychological therapies to all New Zealanders. We sincerely hope that government will work with us to make those ideas a reality and give the new system the best chance of success.

The NZ College of Clinical Psychologists represents the interests of the 1600+ Clinical Psychologists currently registered in New Zealand. Clinical Psychologists are experts in wellbeing and disability, working across a large range of specialties and employers- including DHBs, ACC, Oranga Tamariki, Corrections, NGOs, PHOs and in private practice.

