

15 January 2016

Mental Health and Addiction Workforce Action Plan

Ministry of Health draft Mental Health and Addiction Workforce Action Plan 2016-2020

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the draft Mental Health and Addiction Workforce Action Plan 2016-2020 (draft Plan).

As you will be aware, I am charged with promoting and protecting the rights of health and disability services consumers, as set out in the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code). One of my functions under the Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994 (the HDC Act) is to make public statements in relation to any matter affecting the rights of health or disability services consumers.

During my time as Commissioner, I have been sending a clear message to the sector of my vision for health care services in New Zealand. That vision is a consumer-centred system; a system built on the concepts of seamless services, consumer engagement, transparency, and an empowering culture.

I support what the draft Plan seeks to achieve, including the focus on a “whole-of-systems” and person-centred approach to the delivery of care, provided by a competent, cohesive workforce.

I also support the draft Plan's broad definition of the mental health and addiction workforce, which includes family and whanau, and that recognises the need for integrated care that is responsive to consumers' mental and physical health care needs. While the draft Plan acknowledges the role of mental health and addiction service users in their care and treatment, I am of the view that it may also be appropriate to consider promoting and supporting self care as part of the actions relevant to prevention and early intervention as set out under Priority One.

Overall, I consider that the draft Plan provides a useful position from which to implement meaningful improvements in mental health and addiction service delivery.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan. I trust my comments are helpful.