

Hon Chris Hipkins



MP for Remutaka

Minister of Education

Minister of Health

Minister of State Services

Leader of the House

Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

Kevin Allan
Mental Health Commissioner
Health and Disability Commissioner
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Dear Kevin

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 July 2020 about the most recent Monitoring and Advocacy Report. I appreciate you welcoming me in my new position as Minister of Health, and for taking the time to bring aspects of the Report to my attention.

As the Report acknowledges, good progress has been made, but ongoing whole-of-government and whole-of-community effort is needed to achieve the Government's vision of mental health and wellbeing for all New Zealanders.

He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction sets a clear direction for transforming our approach to mental health and addiction in New Zealand. The Government's response to *He Ara Oranga* provides the agenda for change. Change of this scale will however take time, and I agree that implementation needs to be carefully planned, sequenced and coordinated.

The Government's response made clear that transformation would start with four initial priority areas – establishing the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, strengthening suicide prevention efforts, beginning the process to repeal and replace the Mental Health Act, and expanding access and choice of support. Efforts over the past year have focused on these priorities, and this work will continue.

As you have noted, the Ministry of Health has also developed and released *Kia Kaha, Kia Māia, Kia Ora Aotearoa: COVID-19 Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Recovery Plan*. This provides a framework to guide collective efforts and sets out the actions needed over the next 12–18 months to support the psychosocial wellbeing of New Zealanders, including building the social and economic foundations for mental wellbeing.

As part of the Government's response to *He Ara Oranga*, the Ministry is leading work to develop a longer-term pathway that will sequence further actions and guide investment to transform our approach to mental health and wellbeing. This longer-term pathway will build on the actions in the Psychosocial Recovery Plan. It will take into account work needed to address the broader social determinants of mental wellbeing, as well as specific actions required within the health and disability sector and areas best led by communities. The Ministry is working closely with other agencies and stakeholders to implement this work.

Further leadership and oversight of whole-of-government efforts is also provided by the Social Wellbeing Board. The Board has been directed by Cabinet to oversee the cross-agency coordination of the Government's response to *He Ara Oranga* and the collective approach to longer-term action on mental health and addiction.

I have directed the Ministry to consider your recommendations as part of the development of the longer-term pathway. I expect officials to engage with you on the development of the pathway and would value your input and expertise.

Thank you again for your work and for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Health