

10 November 2020

Hon. Andrew Little
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

By email: a.little@ministers.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister Little

Pressing need for action plan for mental wellbeing reforms

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Health and best wishes in your new role.

Implementing the He Ara Oranga agenda – good progress – urgent need for action plan in 2020

I noted, in my June 2020 independent monitoring report on mental health and addiction service, that good progress has been made in implementing some recommendations from *He Ara Oranga*. However, I also recommended an action plan to implement the Government's full *He Ara Oranga* agenda be prepared by 31 December 2020.

Subsequently I wrote to your colleague, Minister Hipkins, on 7 July (copy and reply attached) advising that the need for an action plan was pressing given *He Ara Oranga* was released in November 2018. Failure to establish the action plan risks significant loss of traction in improving the mental wellbeing of New Zealanders.

I am not seeking a lengthy, unattainable list of things to do. I am seeking a plan which has clarity of vision, execution and accountability – with sharply focused, carefully considered objectives and priorities. I am also seeking a collaborative approach to both developing and implementing the plan with Māori, people with lived experience, providers and other sector leaders so that those with the most relevant experience and opportunity work together from the start.

An important, easily addressed component of the plan is for public clarity about which minister will be responsible for leading the implementation of this whole of government agenda. That is important to help ensure transparency and accountability. I note Minister Hipkins has advised me that the Ministry of Health will lead the development of the plan.

Response to other recommendations

In my July letter to Minister Hipkins I requested a response to the recommendations in my June monitoring report by **30 November 2020**. I intend to brief the sector in December on the Government's response and any additional comments I may have about the further development of mental health and addiction services, prior to transferring this monitoring responsibility to the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.

A copy of my full report, a summary of key points and press release is available at:
<https://www.hdc.org.nz/news-resources/search-resources/mental-health/monitoring-and-advocacy-report-of-the-mental-health-commissioner-2020/>

Transparent advocacy

Given HDC's statutory role as an independent advocate in relation to improving mental health and addiction services, I propose to publish this letter and your responses on the Health and Disability Commissioner's website, as I have done previously.

I have copied this letter to Hayden Wano, Chair of the Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, with whom I liaise closely during the transition of HDC's mental health and addiction services monitoring role to the new Commission, and the Ministry of Health for its information.

Further discussion

I am happy to discuss these issues and my monitoring report further with you.

Nāku iti noa, nā

Kevin Allan
Mental Health Commissioner

CC Hayden Wano, Chair, Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission
Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General, Ministry of Health
Toni Gutschlag, Acting Deputy Director-General, Mental Health, Ministry of Health

Encls.