

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



Kevin Allan
Mental Health Commissioner
Health and Disability Commissioner
c/o janine.stewart@hdc.org.nz

Dear Mr Allan

Recommendations from June 2020 Monitoring and Advocacy Report

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 November 2020 regarding recommendations from your June 2020 Monitoring and Advocacy Report. I welcome you sharing this with me, and I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your advocacy in the sector. I value your ongoing contribution to this kōrerō and the mahi of Government as we move towards to a better future for the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

Implementing the response to *He Ara Oranga*

The Government continues to make good progress on implementing the response to *He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction*, while also developing a longer-term pathway for transformation.

Your June 2020 recommendations, including your recommendation for an Action Plan, are being taken into consideration alongside the recommendations contained in *He Ara Oranga* and in the Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission's final report. These are being considered as part of the Government's response to the Initial Commission's report and as we progress our response to *He Ara Oranga*.

As you are aware, the Ministry of Health released an updated version of *Kia Kaha, Kia Māia, Kia Ora Aotearoa: COVID-19 Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Plan* in December 2020. *Kia Kaha* represents the first phase of the longer-term pathway. The updated version sets out cross-government actions over the next 12-18 months to support the mental wellbeing of New Zealanders, including actions as part of the response to *He Ara Oranga*. It also identifies which agencies are responsible for leading implementation.

The longer-term pathway will build on the outcomes, objectives and actions articulated in *Kia Kaha* and signal the direction of travel for the medium-to-long-term. It will also outline the longer-term phasing of the implementation of the remaining recommendations in *He Ara Oranga*. This will help ensure the longer-term transformation work in response to *He Ara Oranga* will support our recovery from COVID-19, while also improving mental wellbeing outcomes for New Zealanders.

Many stakeholders provided input into the development of *Kia Kaha*, and wide-ranging engagement undertaken with the sector and communities since the Government's response to *He Ara Oranga* has informed this work. I expect Ministry of Health officials to commence further engagement to inform the development of the longer-term pathway and its implementation shortly. Following this further engagement, I intend to take a paper to Cabinet to seek approval to a whole-of-government pathway to transform New Zealand's approach to mental health and addiction. I have expressed my expectation to Ministry officials that this occurs as swiftly as possible, while also allowing for further engagement.

I strongly agree with your assessment of the importance of a shared vision and clarity of direction for transformation. I am also cognisant, especially given events of the past year, of the importance of flexibility, agility and responsiveness to the changing needs and circumstances of communities. Balancing these two goals will require ongoing engagement and input from communities, the sector and key stakeholders, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.

Transparent advocacy

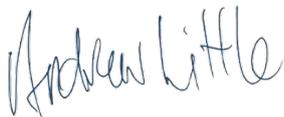
I greatly appreciate your commitment to transparency and your ongoing collaboration with and support for the Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission as we transition to a permanent Commission.

Meeting with Director-General of Health

I understand you met with the Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, on Monday 18 January to discuss the recommendations in your June 2020 Monitoring and Advocacy Report and your calls for an action plan. I trust that meeting was productive, and I hope the information in this letter is helpful.

Thank you again for your ongoing advocacy and work to improve mental health and addiction outcomes for New Zealanders. Your contribution has and will continue to be valued as we progress through the next stages of this important work.

Yours sincerely



Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Health