



Minister for Mental Health

Response to the petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs

12 June 2024

These documents have been proactively released by the Ministry of Health on behalf of the Minister for Mental Health Hon Matt Doocey.

Title of Cabinet paper:

- Minister for Mental Health response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise Degrees that Lead to Mental Health Jobs.

Title of minutes:

- LEG-24-MIN-0062 – Minute of Decision: Response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise Degrees that lead to Mental Health Jobs.
- CAB-24-MIN-0127 – Minute of Decision: Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 12 April 2024.

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes:

- Out of scope of this proactive release.
- S 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 12 April 2024

On 15 April 2024, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 12 April 2024:

Out of scope

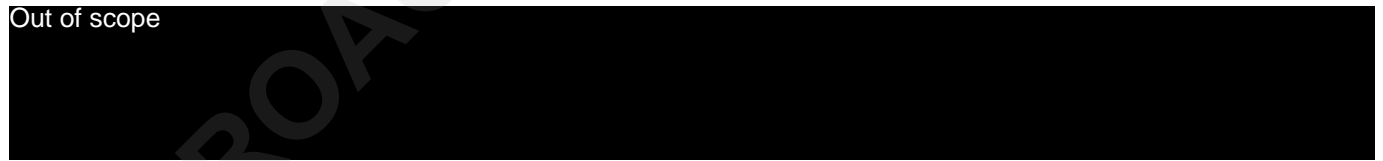


LEG-24-MIN-0062

**Response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson:
Subsidise Degrees that Lead to Mental Health Jobs**
Portfolio: Mental Health

CONFIRMED

Out of scope



Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Minute of Decision

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Response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise Degrees that lead to Mental Health Jobs

Portfolio Mental Health

On 11 April 2024, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **noted** that on 7 February 2024, the Petitions Committee referred the petition entitled “Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs” to the Minister for Mental Health for a response;
- 2 **noted** that:
 - 2.1 the response acknowledges that shortages within the mental health workforce are a barrier to addressing the mental health needs of New Zealanders;
 - 2.2 the education and health sectors provide a range of existing allowances and scholarships to encourage education and training for mental health and addiction roles;
 - 2.3 close consideration is being given to expanding and enhancing initiatives that will enhance momentum in growing this vital workforce;
- 3 **approved** the Minister for Mental Health’s (the Minister’s) response to the petition “Response to the Petition Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs”, attached to the submission under LEG-24-SUB-0062 as Appendix A;
- 4 **noted** that the Minister’s response must be presented to the House by 1 May 2024;
- 5 **invited** the Minister to present the response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 380;
- 6 **invited** the Minister to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Rebecca Davies
Committee Secretary

Attendance: see over

Present:

Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Chris Bishop (Chair)
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Matt Dooney
Hon Nicole Mckee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Andrew Bayly
Hon Scott Simpson
Todd Stevenson, MP
Jamie Arbuckle, MP

Officials present from:

Officials Committee for LEG
Office of the Leader of the House

PROACTIVELY RELEASED

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Mental Health
Chair, Cabinet Legislation Committee

Minister for Mental Health response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks approval of my response to the petition of Millicent Dickenson: "Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs".

Background

- 2 The Petitions Committee has referred the petition of Millicent Dickenson to my office for direct response.
- 3 The petitioner expresses concerns that New Zealanders are not receiving adequate support for their mental health needs because there are not enough mental health workers. The petition urges the Government to subsidise mental health degrees to lessen the financial burden of studying, which could result in more people entering the workforce.

Growing the mental health and addiction workforce is a priority

- 4 In establishing the Mental Health portfolio, this Government has acknowledged that the mental health and addiction needs of New Zealanders require concerted attention. My priorities for the portfolio are to:
 - 4.1 increase access to mental health and addiction services
 - 4.2 strengthen our focus on prevention and early intervention
 - 4.3 grow the mental health and addiction workforce.
- 5 My priority around growing and sustaining the mental health and addiction workforce is important not only for the health sector, but also for other government agencies and non-government organisations that rely on this workforce.
- 6 A multi-faceted work programme is underway within Health New Zealand and partner agencies to grow and support the mental health and addiction workforce. This includes expanded provision of mental health support in general practices; in schools and youth centres; in kaupapa Māori and Pacific settings; in tertiary institutions; and through online and telehealth methods. A range of activity related to this petition is noted in the following section.

- 7 However, it is clear we need to do more to address the mental health needs of New Zealanders. Significant gaps in our mental health and addiction workforce are the single greatest barrier to increasing access to services and ongoing service delivery and development. Between 2018 and 2022, there was an increase in mental health and addiction full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the health system from 12,698 FTEs to 15,534 FTEs, but vacancy levels increased in the same period from 6% to 11%.
- 8 We need to attract people to study mental health and addiction careers, support them to complete their qualifications, and build retention once they enter the workforce.
- 9 As indicated in the Speech from the Throne, my initial focus will include expanding the number of psychiatric registrar places and clinical psychology internship places. But a wide range of other clinical and non-clinical workforces play vital roles that we also need to foster. For instance, there is potential to grow the lived experience workforce, to develop psychology associate roles (for those with undergraduate psychology degrees) and to enhance the addictions workforce. This will involve sustained effort over time.
- 10 I am working with health officials and the Minister of Health to pursue significant traction in supporting workforce growth. While these issues are part of a wider global health workforce shortage, we can seek to strengthen and expand our interventions to ensure our workforce is sustainable.

Comment on the petitioner's recommendation and my proposed response

- 11 The petitioner recommends that the Government introduce subsidies for degrees that lead to mental health jobs.
- 12 My response to the petitioner notes that there is a range of existing allowances and scholarships (below), and that I will be giving close consideration to expanding and enhancing initiatives that will advance momentum in growing this vital workforce.
- 13 Through the education system, the Government:
- 13.1 supports tertiary students to meet their living expenses throughout their studies is through student support including student loans and allowances
 - 13.2 subsidises tertiary institutions to meet the cost of teaching and learning services for students.
- 14 Within the health system, Health New Zealand has been undertaking initiatives to increase support for mental health and addiction students. This includes funding for over 400 postgraduate training places via a Skills Matter Programme (through Te Pou workforce development centre) and direct contracts with several universities. The range of training includes cognitive behavioural therapy, solutions-based therapy, clinical leadership, and child and youth mental health.

- 15 Health New Zealand provides funding to mental health and addiction students through:
- 15.1 342 scholarships in 2023 for Māori and Pacific students studying for mental health careers, to encourage student numbers that are more representative of the New Zealand population
 - 15.2 11 scholarships for Muslim students (arising from the response to the mosque shootings), which will increase in 2024 due to high demand
 - 15.3 a new scholarship scheme for those studying towards addiction and gambling harm careers, with the first applications just being assessed
 - 15.4 19 peer support and 26 support worker training bursaries and scholarships.
- 16 Support is also provided to nurses, occupational therapists and social workers to specialise in mental health, through Health New Zealand funding for New Entry to Specialist Practice (NESP) places. In 2023, 303 nurses and 87 allied health workers were enrolled in NESP programmes, with favourable numbers in 2024 also.
- 17 In addition to financial support, a range of additional mechanisms are being utilised to attract people into mental health careers. This includes engaging with school leavers to highlight the diverse careers that are available in mental health and addiction, and international recruitment initiatives specifically aimed at mental health practitioners.
- 18 This is encouraging progress but further work will be needed. At degree level, there is a focus on increasing psychiatry and clinical psychology enrolments. In public health services there are 543 full time psychiatric positions, 106 of which are vacant. We are strongly reliant on overseas training, and there is need for increasing trainees in all psychiatry specialties. Health New Zealand is working with the Royal Australia New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to address this.
- 19 For psychology, the health sector vacancy rate in 2022 was 12.1%. Health New Zealand funds clinical psychology internships in the final year of training, and the number of these has increased from 12 in 2019 to 50 in 2024, along with improved pay rates. While this is significant progress, we need to increase internships further and work with universities to increase the numbers on postgraduate courses.
- 20 Creating further momentum requires a cross-agency approach. The Ministry of Health and Health New Zealand are engaging with key agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission to consider further approaches to increasing the numbers of people entering mental health and addiction careers.

Timing of the government response

- 21 My response must be presented to the House by 1 May 2024.

Consultation

- 22 The Ministry of Health prepared this paper in consultation with Health New Zealand, the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission.

Financial implications

- 23 This paper does not have financial implications.

Publicity

- 24 No specific announcements related to this paper are planned.

Proactive release

- 25 I propose to proactively release this paper, subject to any redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982, once my response has been presented to the House and I have written to the petitioner to advise them of the response.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **note** that on 15 February 2024 the Petitions Committee referred the petition entitled “Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs” to the Minister for Mental Health for direct response;
- 2 **note** that:
 - 2.1 the response acknowledges that shortages within the mental health workforce are a barrier to addressing the mental health needs of New Zealanders;
 - 2.2 the education and health sectors provide a range of existing allowances and scholarships to encourage education and training for mental health and addiction roles;
 - 2.3 close consideration is being given to expanding and enhancing initiatives that will enhance momentum in growing this vital workforce;
- 3 **approve** the Minister for Mental Health’s response to the petition “Response to the Petition Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs”, which is attached to this submission as **Appendix A**;
- 4 **note** that the Minister for Mental Health’s response must be presented to the House by 1 May 2024;
- 5 **invite** the Minister for Mental Health to present the response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 380;

- 6 **invite** the Minister for Mental Health to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Matt Dooney

Minister for Mental Health

PROACTIVELY RELEASED

**Minister for Mental Health Response to the
Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to
mental health jobs – Millicent Dickenson**

Presented to the House of Representatives

In accordance with Standing Order 380

Minister for Mental Health response to the Petition of Millicent Dickenson: Subsidise degrees that lead to mental health jobs

Introduction

- 1 The Minister for Mental Health (the Minister) has considered Millicent Dickenson's petition that the Government introduce subsidies for degrees that lead to mental health jobs.
- 2 The Minister responds to the petition in accordance with Standing Order 380.
- 3 The Government is providing a range of existing allowances and scholarships to encourage education and training in mental health and addiction roles. Momentum in growing this vital workforce will be advanced further through the new Mental Health portfolio, with close consideration being given to expanding and enhancing workforce development initiatives.

Recommendations and Minister's response

- 4 **Petitioner's concerns:** The petitioner is concerned that New Zealanders with mental health needs are not receiving timely and appropriate support because there are not enough mental health workers.
- 5 **Response:** It is acknowledged that shortages within the mental health workforce are a barrier to addressing the mental health needs of New Zealanders.
- 6 The establishment of the Minister for Mental Health portfolio is to ensure that significant traction is made on addressing mental health and addiction support needs. Priorities for the portfolio are to:
 - 6.1 increase access to mental health and addiction services.
 - 6.2 strengthen our focus on prevention and early intervention.
 - 6.3 grow the mental health and addiction workforce.
- 7 The priority focus on growing the mental health and addiction workforce includes attention to a range of occupational groups, with a focus on responsiveness, quality, retention and sustainability.
- 8 This includes working with the education and immigration portfolios to address the workforce vacancies across the system, through both domestic training and upskilling, and attracting offshore talent.
- 9 As indicated in the Speech from the Throne, a priority focus will be on expanding the number of psychiatric registrar places and clinical psychology internship places. A wide range of other clinical and non-clinical workforces play vital roles that also need to be fostered, such as the consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce.

APPENDIX A

- 10 Work to grow the mental health and addiction workforce will build on existing activity underway by Health New Zealand. It will require ongoing efforts to increase traction in supporting New Zealander's mental wellbeing.
- 11 **Petitioner's recommendation:** The petitioner states the view that the shortage of mental health workers reflects a financial burden experienced by students undertaking mental health related degrees. The petitioner proposes that mental health degrees are subsidised so that students are incentivised to study for mental health careers.
- 12 **Response:** The importance of ensuring students are supported to achieve their qualifications is acknowledged. Tertiary sector support for the cost of study includes:
 - 12.1 supporting tertiary students to meet their living expenses throughout their studies is through student support including student loans and allowances.
 - 12.2 subsidises tertiary institutions to meet the cost of teaching and learning services for students.
- 13 Within the health system, Health New Zealand has been undertaking initiatives to increase support for mental health and addiction students. This includes funding for over 400 postgraduate training places via a Skills Matter Programme (through Te Pou workforce development centre) and direct contracts with several universities. The range of training includes cognitive behavioural therapy, solutions-based therapy, clinical leadership, and child and youth mental health.
- 14 Health New Zealand provides funding to mental health and addiction students through:
 - 14.1 342 scholarships in 2023 for Māori and Pacific students studying for mental health careers, to encourage student numbers that are more representative of the New Zealand population.
 - 14.2 11 scholarships for Muslim students (arising from the response to the mosque shootings), which will increase in 2024 due to high demand.
 - 14.3 a new scholarship scheme for those studying towards addiction and gambling harm careers, with the first applications just being assessed.
 - 14.4 19 peer support and 26 support worker training bursaries and scholarships.
- 15 Support is also provided to nurses, occupational therapists and social workers to specialise in mental health, through Health New Zealand funding for New Entry to Specialist Practice (NESP) places. In 2023, 303 nurses and 87 allied health workers were enrolled in NESP programmes, with favourable numbers in 2024 also.

APPENDIX A

- 16 In addition to financial support, a range of additional mechanisms are being utilised to attract people into mental health careers. This includes engaging with school leavers to highlight the diverse careers that are available in mental health and addiction, and international recruitment initiatives specifically aimed at mental health practitioners.
- 17 Degrees where further expansion is needed include psychiatry and clinical psychology, where increased enrolments will be pursued. Health New Zealand is working with the Royal Australia New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to identify barriers and opportunities to encourage medical students to study psychiatry.
- 18 For clinical psychology, Health New Zealand has made significant progress in funding internships in the final year of training and has also improved pay rates. While this is significant progress, we need to increase internships further and work with universities to increase the numbers on postgraduate courses.
- 19 Creating further momentum requires a cross-agency approach. The Ministry of Health and Health New Zealand are engaging with key agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission to consider further approaches to increasing the numbers of people entering mental health and addiction careers.

Conclusion

- 20 It is acknowledged that shortages within the mental health workforce are a barrier to addressing the mental health needs of New Zealanders. Consequently, the mental health and addiction workforce is a priority focus within the newly established Mental Health Ministerial portfolio.
- 21 While there are a range of scholarships and allowances that are supporting study for the mental health and addiction workforce, further close consideration is being given to expanding and enhancing initiatives that will enhance momentum in growing this vital workforce.