

# Aide-Mémoire

## Meeting with Mental Health Matters Initiative Aotearoa on 13 February 2024

<b>Date due to MO:</b>	07 February 2024	<b>Action required by:</b>	N/A
<b>Security level:</b>	IN CONFIDENCE	<b>Health Report number:</b>	H2024035307
<b>To:</b>	Hon Matt Dooney, Minister for Mental Health		
<b>Consulted:</b>	Health New Zealand: <input type="checkbox"/> Māori Health Authority: <input type="checkbox"/>		

### Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Robyn Shearer	Deputy Director-General   Clinical, Community and Mental Health	s 9(2)(a)
Kiri Richards	Associate Deputy Director-General (Acting), Mental Health and Addiction   Clinical, Community and Mental Health	s 9(2)(a)

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**To:** Hon Matt Dooney, Minister for Mental Health

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**Details of meeting:** 13 February 2024  
8:15am – 9.00am in 4.1R EW

**Purpose of meeting:** You are meeting with Mental Health Matters Initiative Aotearoa (MHMI), a youth-led organisation focused on addressing challenges in the mental health system and raising awareness of mental health in New Zealand. Amy Skipper, founder of MHMI, will be attending from the organisation. Suggested talking points on these topics are provided in **Appendix A**.

**Comment:**

**Overview of Mental Health Matters Initiative Aotearoa**

MHMI is a youth-created and led advocacy group. This organisation emphasises addressing injustices within the mental health system by raising awareness and creating a platform for young people to share their experiences and have their voices heard. Its primary focus is to address what they describe as a severe mental health crisis due to problems such as under-resourcing, under-funding, and stigma.

MHMI's activities mainly revolve around mental health advocacy, awareness and conversation creation, providing a platform for youth voices, social action and community mobilisation, promoting an accessible and equitable mental health system, and networking and updates.

The MHMI's core values are youth engagement (Rangatahi), accessibility (Āheitanga), and effectiveness. Their approach involves taking actionable steps like grassroots movements to influence policy and using their platforms to promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora has verified that they do not hold any contracts with MHMI.

**Petition of Amy Skipper**

On 29 March 2022, a petition by Amy Skipper, founder of the MHMI, was presented to the House of Representatives. The petition sought increased funding for public and private mental health services. The request urged government to enhance resources and support, ensuring accessible care for people facing mental health challenges.

The Health Committee's response to the petition acknowledged Amy Skipper's contributions in advocating for enhanced mental health services and recognised the need for better awareness of existing services as well as the need to upskill the workforce. The majority of the Committee did not consider it appropriate to make recommendations on the area of funding of private care given New Zealand has a publicly funded health system.

The Committee's report encouraged Health New Zealand to continue to invest in increasing the available options through the public health system, to continue to grow the mental health and addiction workforce, and to improve promotion and awareness of the services available to people. There was a particular focus in the Committee's report on the importance of the NGO sector and community organisations in increasing access to mental health support.

### **Mental health areas that may be raised**

MHMI has written an open letter to the Government outlining four policy demands that it considers the Government should implement. These areas are outlined below.

*Establish a Minister of Mental Health who would work alongside the Ministry of Health and Minister of Health to ensure a direct line of accountability for mental health policies*

- You may wish to acknowledge the unique position you are in as the first dedicated Minister for Mental Health.

*Invest in the workforce, including training and creating more pathways*

- We note that developing a resilient, diverse and skilled workforce is crucial to improve the public health system's approach to mental health and addiction services. You may wish to acknowledge that workforce is one of your key priorities.
- Health New Zealand has a dedicated work programme to increase and upskill the existing workforce and to develop new ways to provide services in primary and community settings. This includes:
  - more New Entry to Specialist Practice places for nurses, social workers, and occupational therapists
  - training more psychiatrists
  - developing clinical psychology intern hubs
  - scholarships for Māori and Pacific students
  - training in talking therapies
  - primary care nurse credentialing
  - post-graduate study placements.

*Invest in community-based care, including increasing subsidies for private services*

- We note that the Ministry does not directly subsidise private mental health and addiction services because the country has a public health system, although some Health New Zealand districts and other government agencies may have their own arrangements.

- Work underway within the health system to help ensure people have access to the services when they need them includes:
  - implementing the Access and Choice Programme
  - recent investment in specialist services, including services for young people
  - promoting telehealth and online support.
- You may also wish to note the Government's commitment to establish the Mental Health Innovation Fund to expedite access to mental health services and support community and NGO providers.

*Reform the school curriculum so that young people can develop a comprehensive and sensitive understanding of mental health*

- Improving mental health outcomes requires a whole-of-government approach, and education settings are an important environment for supporting children and young people's mental wellbeing. We know levels of mental distress in young people are increasing.
- While you are not responsible for the school curriculum, health officials support the Ministry of Education in this area: for example, in the development of the 2022 Mental Health Education Guidelines which are a guide for teachers, leaders and school boards to support a mentally healthy schooling environment.
- There is significant activity underway in the education system to contribute to improved mental health outcomes. For example:
  - Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Education together deliver Mana Ake in seven regions. Mana Ake supports schools to make safe and supportive environments at the whole-school level, as well as supporting teachers with best practice strategies for promoting mental wellbeing and responding to mental wellbeing needs. It also provides direct support to children experiencing social, emotional or wellbeing challenges.
  - School-Based Health Services (SBHS) offer nurse-lead primary care to students at in decile one to five secondary schools plus Teen Parent Units and Activity Centres and Alternative Education sites nationwide. SBHS are available to approximately 115,000 students across approximately 300 schools. The most common issues include trauma-related health, mental health, addictions, and sexual/reproductive health.
- Other in-school initiatives include:
  - Whole-school approaches to supporting safe, inclusive learning environments that promote wellbeing such as Positive Behaviour for Learning Schoolwide, which promotes positive behaviour to prevent problem behaviours such as bullying; and Tūturu, a Health New Zealand/Education programme which

fosters learners' critical thinking skills to strengthen their ability to navigate life's challenges.

- Supporting teachers to create supportive classroom environments – for example through Sparklers classroom resources for supporting mental wellbeing with younger students with fun activities. Mana Ake and the Guidelines mentioned above also contribute in this space.



Kiri Richards  
Acting Deputy Director-General  
**Clinical, Community and Mental Health**

PROACTIVELY RELEASED

# Appendix A: Suggested talking points

## General

- I appreciate the work that you do to uplift the voices of young people and to empower young minds, and I acknowledge the importance of hearing directly from young people.
- When we listen to young people in designing mental health and addiction policies and services, we get better results for everyone.
- I also appreciate the work and awareness put into your petition to increase funding for and availability of mental health services.

## Discussion

- I acknowledge your aspirations for an equitable and accessible mental health system for New Zealand. I share this aspiration.
- I appreciate how you have advocated for a dedicated Minister for Mental Health. My role represents this Government's commitment and focus to improving mental health outcomes.
- The priorities you have stated in your open letter to the Government align with mine.
- Ensuring timely access to mental health services when needed, developing a diverse workforce that is able to support New Zealanders' mental health needs, and increasing our focus on prevention and early intervention are my top priorities.
- Now more than ever, we need to support and work together to meet the diverse mental health needs of New Zealanders.
- In particular, we must support the mental health and wellbeing of our young people. This includes working with the education sector to ensure learning environments support mental wellbeing and to equip young people with the resources to maintain their own wellbeing.
- I am also committed to enabling communities and NGOs to be part of the solution. The Government's commitment to establish the Mental Health Innovation Fund will support more community organisations to deliver mental health and wellbeing supports.
- We need a comprehensive approach to promoting mental wellbeing, preventing mental distress and enhancing mental health services for those who need them. I intend to drive a collective, whole-of-government approach in this new role.

## Next steps

- I would like to thank you for your time and thank you again for the work you have been doing.