



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Initial Government Response to the Report of the Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction

Portfolio                      Health

On 10 December 2018, Cabinet:

#### Proposed approach for responding to the Inquiry

- 1        **noted** that the Minister of Health received the final Report (the Report) of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction (the Inquiry) on 28 November 2018;
- 2        **noted** the contribution of everyone who provided input to the Inquiry and its Report;
- 3        **noted** that the Minister of Health publicly released the Report on 4 December 2018;
- 4        **noted** that when the terms of reference for the Inquiry were drafted, it was anticipated that its findings would inform service and community response over at least the next decade;
- 5        **noted** that a phased government response to the Inquiry is proposed, comprising:
  - 5.1      an initial response to the Inquiry's Report with urgent progress in five action areas (outlined in paragraph 30 of the paper under CAB-18-SUB-0621);
  - 5.2      a more detailed response to each of the 40 recommendations (to be provided to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC) in March 2019);
  - 5.3      a 5-10 year plan to transform the approach to mental health and addiction, building on the direction outlined by the Inquiry **s 9(2)(f)(iv)** **[REDACTED]** to give effect to the transformation (to be provided to SWC later in 2019);
- 6        **directed** the Ministry of Health and other agencies to work together to develop the phased response by:
  - 6.1      evaluating each of the Inquiry's recommendations, including system and workforce impacts, potential costs, and implementation readiness;
  - 6.2      developing a plan for how to respond to each of the Inquiry's recommendations;
  - 6.3      working with people with lived experience, Māori, and sector partners to evaluate the recommendations;

- 6.4 determining the most appropriate way for the Minister of Health to monitor progress on the planned response so that the Minister can keep Cabinet updated;
- 7 **invited** the Minister of Health to report back to SWC with a more detailed response to the Inquiry and next steps in March 2019;

### **Budget 2019 proposals for Mental Health and Addiction**

- 8 **noted** that mental health is one of the core priorities for the first Wellbeing Budget (Budget 2019);
- 9 **noted** that to enable cross-agency collaboration in response to the recommendations of the Inquiry, the deadline for submitting mental health initiatives to Treasury has been extended to Friday 18 January 2019, with an expectation that placeholder initiatives are submitted on 14 December 2018;
- 10 **noted** that the Minister of Health intends to submit Budget 2019 proposals for a mental health and wellbeing package, which will help respond to the Inquiry's recommendations and be aligned with a transformed approach to mental health and addiction, and will include proposals to address current pressures for mental health and addiction services;

### **Suicide Prevention**

- 11 **noted** that the Inquiry recommended the urgent completion of a suicide prevention strategy and implementation plan;
- 12 **directed** Ministry of Health officials to work with other agencies to urgently complete a suicide prevention strategy and implementation plan;
- 13 **invited** the Minister of Health to bring a draft suicide prevention strategy and implementation plan to SWC by June 2019;

### **Drug law reform**

- 14 **noted** that the Inquiry recommended reforming drug policy and laws with a focus on minimising harm and promoting health;
- 15 **noted** that the need for more drug treatment services is well signalled in the Inquiry Report;
- 16 **noted** that the government proposes action on synthetic drugs as a first step in exploring wider drug reform, and that the Minister of Health has submitted a separate paper on this matter [CAB-18-MIN-0620];
- 17 **invited** the Minister of Health to return to SWC in 2019 with options on drug law reform including modernisation of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975;

### **Further work to establish a Mental Health Commission**

- 18 **noted** that the Inquiry recommended change to strengthen leadership and oversight of the mental health and addiction system;
- 19 **noted** that the Minister of Health will work with Social and Justice Sector Ministers and the Associate Ministers of Health on how to strengthen leadership and ensure all relevant sectors are engaged in preventing and responding to mental health and addiction challenges;

- 20 **noted** that the Inquiry recommended the urgent establishment of an independent Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, with a proposed set of functions and powers, to provide leadership and oversight of mental health and addiction in New Zealand;
- 21 **invited** the Minister of Health and Minister of State Services to report back to SWC by June 2019 on the form, functions and establishment process for a Mental Health Commission;
- 22 **noted** that operational funding for a potential Mental Health Commission will be sought in Budget 2019;

**Legislative reform of the Mental Health Act (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 (the Mental Health Act)**

- 23 **noted** that the Inquiry heard many concerns about the Mental Health Act and the negative impact on people in terms of compulsion, seclusion and restraint;
- 24 **noted** that New Zealand has faced strong criticism about the Mental Health Act, particularly related to non-compliance with international obligations;
- 25 **directed** Ministry of Health officials to provide options on the scope, timeframes and resourcing required to reform the Mental Health Act by June 2019.

Michael Webster  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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**Hard-copy distribution:**

Prime Minister  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister of Health