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Action required by: Tuesday 31 October 2017

Memorandum: 100 Day Plan

To: Hon Dr David Clark, Minister of Health

Date: 27 October 2017

Purpose

This note provides an update on the delivery of the 100 day commitments that fall in the health portfolio. It also contains background points (should you wish to use them), for discussions with your colleagues or at Cabinet on Tuesday 31 October 2017.

Introduction

We are committed to supporting you implement the following 100 day plan commitments:

- Establishing a mental health inquiry (the Inquiry).
- Making medicinal cannabis available for people with terminal illness or in chronic pain.

These are our top priorities and we know you are keen to advance them quickly. A discussion with you about this work will aid us to maintain momentum on these matters.

Mental health inquiry

Process

1. We have initiated discussions with the Department for Internal Affairs and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet who both play a role in the establishment of public inquiries.
2. We are assessing different options for the form that an inquiry could take and putting together a draft timeline and approach for your approval. The Inquiries Act 2013 provides for three types of inquiry: Royal Commission, public inquiry or government inquiry. All three have identical powers, and differ only in status, method of appointment, and the way they report back to government.
3. You will also need to make decisions on the appointment of the Chair and other members to the Inquiry. We are available to support you in developing a long list of candidates and other establishment advice you may wish to seek from us.

Scope

4. The scope of the Inquiry is a key consideration for you. A narrow scope might focus on current mental health services, a broader scope could also cover the prevention and promotion of mental wellbeing and the response of the wider government sector to mental health needs. If a broader scope is preferred, you may wish to engage with your colleagues in relevant portfolios, including Education, Social Development and Justice.
5. The terms of reference for the Inquiry could also set out the relationship between the inquiry and the re-establishment of a Mental Health Commission.

Addressing immediate needs in the sector

Contacts:	Hamiora Bowkett, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer	021375455
	Hannah Cameron, Deputy Chief Policy Officer	021783574

6. The Government has identified priorities for additional mental health services, particularly for young people. We are developing options for your consideration on the implementation of these priorities, including implications for available funding.

Medicinal cannabis

7. We would welcome a discussion with you on the policy objectives for changes in relation to medicinal cannabis. There is a wide spectrum of approaches that can be taken.
8. In the interim we are preparing information on:
 - a. Julie Anne Genter's Private Members Bill
 - b. the current situation in New Zealand, and internationally
 - c. non-legislative options that could enhance access to cannabis products.

Key lines that you may wish to use in discussions with your colleagues, or at Cabinet

I have instructed my department to commence preparation for the health 100 day commitments.

Mental health

Mental health will be a top priority for health. This is also an area where other government agencies can play a role, particularly in relation to prevention and the promotion of health and wellbeing.

Key decisions for this Cabinet in the next month will include:

- the scope of the Mental Health Inquiry (the Inquiry)
- the type of inquiry to be undertaken, and associated timeframes
- the appointment of a suitable Chair and members to the Inquiry.

At the same time, I will be discussing with officials how we can quickly implement our priorities to respond to mental health needs, particularly among young people.

Medicinal cannabis

There is a spectrum of options for enhancing access to medicinal cannabis. I will be having further discussions with officials on our policy objectives and how they can best be achieved.

Key decisions for this Cabinet in the next month will include:

- selecting options regarding law changes to enhance access to medicinal cannabis
- considering whether non-legislative changes should also be made concurrently.

END.

