

Platform member briefing – Thursday 22 April 2021

Announcement on the future of the health and disability system

Kia ora koutou katoa

We have waited with bated breath for the announcement yesterday by the Minister of Health Hon Andrew Little and Associate Minister of Health Peeni Henare. This short briefing is to bring you up to speed with the key changes that will lead to the transformation of the health and disability system. I will endeavour in brief to highlight what this will mean for the Mental Health and Addiction (MHA) Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and community provider sector.

In brief the changes are bold and are as follows:

The public health system will have a strong focus of preventative healthcare.

1. The Ministry of Health will focus on strategy, policy regulation and systems outcome monitoring. The Director-General of Health will continue to advise the Government and statutory roles such as the Director of Public Health and the Director of Mental Health will remain within the Ministry. The Ministry will not be involved in the provision of on-the-ground health services.
2. A new organisation provisionally named Health New Zealand (Health NZ) will be responsible for running all public hospitals and the delivery of care and services currently being provided by District Health Boards (DHBs) and the Ministry. Health NZ will also be responsible for planning and commissioning primary and community health services for the whole population. Its operations will be spread across four regional bases, but it will be run as an integrated national health service. The exact regional boundaries are yet to be defined. Health NZ will also have a physical presence across the country to ensure it is in touch with local needs.
3. The twenty (20) DHBs and the Health Promotion Agency will be merged into Health NZ.
4. A Māori Health Authority will be established to give effect to tino rangatiratanga in health and to advise the Government and Health NZ. The Māori Health Authority will also commission health services directly.
5. A new Public Health Agency, within the Ministry of Health, will lead public health strategy, policy, analysis and monitoring. Public health units will be brought together into a national public health service located within Health NZ.

These changes are intended to reduce the complexity of the health system, as some processes have had an impact on the way MHA NGO and community providers have been able to operate. You can learn more about these changes from the [White Paper](#) released yesterday and the [presentation](#) by the Minister of Health, his [speech](#) and the one by Associate Minister Henare

What does this mean for us? Whilst the glare of changes might be unsettling and create uncertainty, it is very much going to be business as usual for the MHA NGO and community sector. This change also heralds opportunity, to advocate and influence to ensure a streamlined less complex system and has the potential to remove all the issues which have impacted on the MHA NGO and community sector. For example, multiple funding contracts for the same services, auditing and compliance costs, variable pricing of services, attending to supporting and developing the workforce.

Looking ahead, the interim Health NZ and Maori Health Authority will be established, with legislation being drafted and passed by April 2022, and new arrangements coming into effect on 1 July 2022. We must grab every opportunity to influence and ensure that MHA NGO

and community providers do not go backwards and become very much a part of primary and community care locality networks.

Also, in the time ahead we will be working to ensure that the long-term pathway for implementing He Ara Oranga does not go into abeyance, as attention turns to the wider health system of which we too play a big part. The Minister of Health acknowledged yesterday that the mental health and addiction work programme is still a priority and needs to continue with pace. Together, let us grab the opportunities as we see them and as they arise.

As and when we learn more details about yesterday's announcement, we will endeavour to keep you abreast of what is happening.

Tēnā koutou

Memo Musa
Chief Executive