

# PLATFORM



## Health of Older People (HOP) Strategy Submission

This submission is from Platform Trust, Level 3, 181 Thorndon Quay, Wellington.

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### Background Information

Platform Trust is a national network of non-government community organisations (NGOs) that provide a wide range of mental health and addiction support services across New Zealand. In 2015 almost 60,000 New Zealanders accessed support from NGO services.

Platform is well connected with the wider NGO sector including through various network groups such as Hui E! and the Ministry of Health's NGO Council.

### Summary

Platform congratulates the Ministry of Health on the development of the Health of Older People Strategy draft through its consultation with key stakeholders.

We commend the Ministry for its focus on wellness throughout the document, and the acknowledgment that mental wellness is a key part of wellbeing.

We consider that there are challenges in applying a social investment and/or preventative approach with a cohort that experiences many of its outcomes largely influenced by earlier life events and/or determinants.

We welcome the Ministry's acknowledgment of the impact of the social determinants of health and wellbeing with the subsequent disparity in outcomes in later life and potentially reduced ability to manage these.

While we appreciate that the Strategy is pitched at a high-level through a Government stewardship lens, we strongly agree with the NGO Council's submission that there appears to be an overreliance in it on government institutional involvement for supporting the health of older people. This medicalised approach to health and wellbeing overemphasises health professionals' role, supplemented by others rather than focusing on and investing in community and natural supports, supplemented by health professionals as required.

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The social investment approach, and the principles expressed in the New Zealand Health Strategy, would suggest that many of the system changes that are required to achieve the vision of the HOP Strategy will come from families/whanau, communities and community providers (including NGOs) rather than through institutions. Strong cross-agency collaboration will also be required so that the system is connected and navigable.

We echo the concern raised in the NGO Council's submission that the various strategies included in page 6 of the HOP Strategy, including Rising to the Challenge, must be brought together in a cohesive and interconnected way when it comes to operationalising the strategies.

### **Social Investment Approach/Stewardship**

We know that the health, social and justice systems are at the early stages of a shift toward investing in prevention/early intervention using the social investment approach. We wholeheartedly support this approach as it has the potential to reduce the senseless siloing of strategies, policy, commissioning and operational activities. However, as identified in the Strategy, much of the service commissioning/allocation of funding still sits within DHB control.

*'To achieve the best value and high performance, district health boards need to commission services in a way that will provide older people with quality care in the right setting at a sustainable cost. If we can achieve this, we will reduce inequities in access to these services, and their effectiveness' (p.25)*

There is an inherent tension between the Ministry's principles of using a truly person-centered approach versus the DHBs' mandate to use a population-based funding model through a largely medicalised system. This is acknowledged lightly in the Strategy and we hope that it is given further consideration.

*'Building a health system that can deliver good health outcomes requires us to take stock of... the way we currently fund and deliver care, our performance and the tools and resources we need to reach our goals.' (p.3)*

The New Zealand Productivity Commission's More Effective Social Services report promotes some alternative models of commissioning that Platform believes would provide greater opportunities to realise the HOP Strategy's vision and more equitable outcomes across New Zealand.

### **The Role of the Community Sector**

In its document On Track, Platform has articulated the NGO sector's vision for a One Team approach toward improving the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders experiencing mental illness or addictions. More than the role set out in the Strategy's statement below, Platform believes that non-government organisations are 'players' within the health and social system, not optional or desirable partners outside of it.

*'Achieving the vision and goals set out in this Strategy will require the commitment of a vast range of players across and throughout the health and social system, working in partnership with non-governmental organisations, communities, older people and their families.' (p. 29)*



Platform recently signed a joint statement with Network 4 (ProCARE, CompassHealth, Pegasus and Pinnacle Midlands Health Network) demonstrating that primary health organisations and the non-government/community sector are committed to working collaboratively as vital players in preventing people, including our older people, from interacting with acute services. We are best positioned to provide services and supports closer to home using community-based models of service delivery to address the complexity of people's lives, including their social circumstances. This approach absolutely supports the HOP Strategy's hope to develop a *'system that is truly person-centred, supporting and empowering people to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing, and is coordinated and integrated around people's needs and aspirations, providing high-quality services that deliver value for people'* [emphasis added].

### **Health Inequities**

Platform is a member of the Equally Well collaborative, generated from the NGO sector, which was recently recognised at the TheMHS Learning Network Awards in the Physical Health and/or Primary Care category. This collaborative has firmly established an evidence base around the poorer physical health outcomes of those experiencing mental health or addictions issues. Equally Well has rallied more than 70 organisations, including NGOs, DHBs, the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine, the New Zealand Nurses Association and the Royal College of Psychiatrists to address this challenge.

We agree that *'to improve the health of different groups, we need to draw on the experience and expertise of community leaders'* (p. 9). We cannot emphasise enough the expertise that is held in the community sector and we urge the Ministry to work with us to *'ensure that we think beyond the narrow definitions of health and work across sectors to achieve a wider vision of good health for everybody'* (p. 10).

Thank you for the opportunity for us to provide feedback into the Strategy.

Platform supports the submission made by the NGO Council.