



**- MEDIA RELEASE -**

## **Mental Health System Needs Long Term Focus Not Constant Review and Funding Cuts**

New Zealand's mental health system is again spiralling downwards. But instead of receiving long-term, system-wide and focussed attention, each crisis, symptomatic of a broken system, is met with review after review, all conducted in isolation. That the Coroner has seen a pattern in a spate of recent homicide cases involving people with mental health issues, and is concerned enough to review these cases together for systemic failures, should be more than enough for the Ministry of Health and district health boards (DHBs) to take serious action.

'It is an untenable situation' says Marion Blake, CEO of Platform Trust. 'Tragically, it seems that it takes devastating and unnecessary deaths for the mental health service system to receive even a brief flicker of attention.'

At a time where better investment and an increase in personnel is unmistakably critical, funding is instead being reduced. The drive for DHBs to find fiscal savings and efficiencies is resulting in funds being mined from vital community mental health services. Just weeks ago, the findings from the Director of Mental Health's inspection at Waikato DHB's Mental Health and Addiction Services indicated a need for 'adequate resources to meet staffing gaps' and identified that a systems-wide change is required – one that includes all community services, primary care, iwi, consumers and family.

The latest review of Capital & Coast DHB's mental health services, resulting from recent homicide cases, comes at a time when the CCDHB is cutting mental health spending. This is a clear demonstration of the futility of these piecemeal reactive reviews for the people who are most affected by service issues.

'Why must we wait to again review what we can clearly see is not working?' asks Marion. 'The mental health system as a whole needs appropriate investment and continued focussed attention so that it can adequately meet the needs of New Zealanders experiencing mental health issues and so that further tragedies can be avoided. These are our people who are most at risk, and we are failing them.'

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