

# PLATFORM



- MEDIA RELEASE -

## It's time to put new money where it makes a difference

The Prime Minister this week announced more money for mental health. However, for there to be any real change in mental health and addictions services, that investment must go to where the people are – to the community.

The current funding system for mental health services is grossly inefficient and outdated. We rely on 20 district health boards (DHBs) to each choose how funding for mental health services is spent to serve the most vulnerable people in their communities. Tragically, we know that mental health funding is not spent reaching the people who need help.

In all, we estimate that around \$43 million per year is not going into public mental health service delivery. In 2014 there were 304 vacant positions in public adult mental health and addictions services<sup>1</sup> (Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui, 2015) and 130 vacant positions in public children's mental health and addictions services<sup>2</sup> (The Werry Centre, 2015).

“DHBs put less money into community mental health and addictions services and intentionally hold staff vacancies in public services, and then use the money to prop up other areas of health and the DHBs' bottom line,” claims Marion Blake, CEO of Platform Trust. “It is time for the Government to hold DHBs to account.”

DHBs will inherently continue to be driven to cover their bottom line with any money they can get, unless their roles as both funders and providers of services are separated. If DHBs cannot or will not recruit staff, the money must go to the community non-government sector, where more people can be helped earlier, and in a more responsive way.

Platform Trust now believes that independent funding and commissioning is the only way we can create change for the better outcomes the Government says it is seeking. It is time to really put some action behind shifting resources to the community.

“If this Government fails to address these issues, then the Prime Minister's promise of more money for mental health will only continue to try to repair a mental health system sitting on the shaky foundation established at the beginning of the last century” says Ms Blake.

Platform Trust is the national network of community organisations that support New Zealanders by providing a wide range of mental health and addiction services and creating a positive place for people experiencing mental health and addiction issues to live and work.

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<sup>1</sup> Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui. (2015). Adult mental health and addiction workforce: 2014 survey of Vote Health funded services. Auckland: Te Pou.

<sup>2</sup> The Werry Centre. (2015). 2014 Stocktake of Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services in New Zealand. Auckland: The Werry Centre for Child & Adolescent Mental Health Workforce Development, The University of Auckland.

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