



## – JOINT MEDIA RELEASE –

### Equal pay for mental health and addiction support workers is a win for everyone

Unions, DHBs and providers have welcomed today's announcement that the Government will enter equal pay negotiations for community mental health and addiction support workers.

"We're thrilled that the Government has followed through on its election commitment to extend the care and support settlement to mental health workers," says Melissa Woolley, Public Service Association national organiser for community public services.

"There have been increasingly worrying signs that many of these workers were considering a move into general care and support work due to the discrepancy in pay, and today's announcement will be a boost to them all."

The PSA and E tū unions lodged an equal pay claim with the Employment Relations Authority on behalf of mental health and addiction support workers in June 2017, following their exclusion from the historic equal pay settlement for other care and support workers. Service providers supported the claim but were not sufficiently resourced to fund the settlement themselves.

"We are relieved and grateful that Minister Clark has given the Government's commitment to addressing this for staff and their employers," says Marion Blake, CEO of Platform Trust. "We need to be able to retain, and to recruit into, our highly skilled workforce that does extraordinarily valuable work to support people when they experience mental health and addictions challenges."

John Ryall, E tū Assistant National Secretary, welcomed the Government's commitment to enter negotiations and praised the claimants in the case who were prepared to fight for fair pay.

"Our members are feeling heartened by this pledge. They saw how it was unfair to be paid less - often to work with the same clients who have both mental health and disability needs - and this is a real win for them," says Ryall.

Formal negotiations on the settlement between the Ministry of Health, unions, DHBs and providers will begin in January 2018. The proposed settlement - modelled on the care and support (pay equity) settlement - would affect around 3,800 mental health and addiction support workers.

"It is in everyone's interests to ensure these vital workers are remunerated fairly for the important work they do in our communities," says Ron Dunham, DHB lead Chief Executive for mental health and addiction services.

"It's the right thing to do, and it will help to ensure that New Zealand has a robust workforce to look after people needing mental health and addiction support."

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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