

Hon Matt Dooccey

Minister for ACC
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Health
Associate Minister of Transport



Mr Hayden Wano
Chair
Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission | Te Hiringa Mahara

Dear Hayden

Delivering timely access to quality health care

As Minister for Mental Health, and your shareholding Minister, this letter sets out my expectations for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission | Te Hiringa Mahara (MHWC) for the remainder of 2023/24 and 2024/25.

I want to thank you for your commitment over the past year to delivering your agreed objectives during a period of significant change in the health system.

Our Coalition Government is committed to ensuring that the wider public service and the health system works well for all New Zealanders. MHWC plays a crucial role in achieving our collective goals for a healthier and more resilient society.

Financial management expectations

We are operating in a difficult fiscal and economic environment locally and internationally and we expect these conditions to be present in the longer term. Your continued focus on delivering your statutory objectives will be crucial, and this needs to be undertaken in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

As health resources will continue to be finite, it will be important to identify and pursue any opportunities to work collaboratively and collectively with other entities where this will result in health gains or enable efficiencies. I also encourage you to prioritise your efforts to areas where you can add most collective value to our understanding of mental wellbeing and system performance, which I discuss further below.

Priorities

The Minister of Health's overarching vision for health is ensuring timely access to quality health care. He wants to achieve good outcomes for all New Zealanders, with a focus on those with highest need as a key criterion.

The Government Policy Statement on Health is the primary direction setting vehicle for the health system and will set out more detail about the priorities for the next three years.

The health system will focus on improvement in three priority areas related to health services which are access, timeliness and quality. The health system will also focus on three priority areas to make improvements to critical enablers; workforce, targets and infrastructure.

The Minister of Health's priorities align strongly with my priorities for mental health and addiction. They are:

- Increase access to mental health and addiction services: New Zealanders deserve better access to timely mental health and addiction support. MHWC's monitoring, advocacy and collaboration roles can help us understand needs and drivers for mental health and addiction service access, as well as patterns and trends to help understand what is needed in future.
- Grow the mental health and addiction workforce: One of the key barriers to improving mental health and addiction services is workforce challenges. MHWC can help drive innovative thinking with tangible, evidence-based recommendations for workforce growth, diversification and utilisation.
- Strengthen focus on prevention and early intervention: The health system should ensure people have access to timely treatment for mental health and addiction challenges, but we must also promote mental wellbeing, prevent issues from escalating and intervene early in the life course and in the course of distress. MHWC is uniquely placed to look across government at other sectors' contributions to mental wellbeing, including ensuring the social, economic, cultural and environmental foundations for mental wellbeing are in place.

I ask that you work alongside other Crown entities to support improvement and look at what role you can play within the sector.

Targets

The Government is reinstating health targets, and you will be aware that the Minister of Health has recently announced five health targets for the system that will be in place from 1 July 2024. The aim of the health targets is to lift performance across priority areas, provide a focus for effort and resource and to support all parts of the system to move together to achieve our health system goals.

I am also setting five targets for mental health and addiction. I expect the mental health and addiction targets to be held to the same standards and expectations as the health targets in terms of leadership, implementation planning, milestones, balancing measures, reporting.

The annual performance expectations and milestones against the targets will be set in the Government Policy Statement on Health for 2024-2027. The monitoring and reporting of targets will be undertaken by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry). The Ministry is currently developing a wider monitoring framework and will be socialising it with key sector stakeholders and agencies, including MHWC.

Governance

Strong governance of your entity will be essential in leading your agency in this environment. We ask that you continue to ensure that your executive staff are providing the right information to enable the Board to make strategic decisions, and to undertake assessment and learning activities to improve the performance of your Board members in their important role.

Accountability

I expect that your reporting, and the associated monitoring undertaken by the Ministry, will enable me to assess both the performance of your entity and how you are contributing to overall system performance.

Expectations for MHWC in the health system

As an independent Crown entity, I ask you to think about how MHWC can add value to wider system performance and to work collaboratively and collectively with other entities as appropriate.

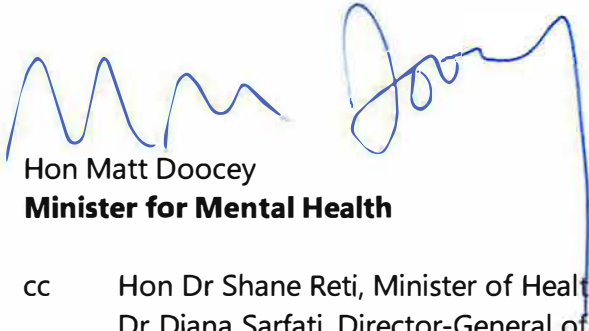
While the Ministry and health entities can monitor system and service inputs, outputs and expenditure, MHWC is uniquely placed to undertake deeper analysis of key issues within the mental health and addiction system, and to monitor cross-government contributions to mental health and wellbeing. I encourage you to prioritise your efforts and resources on areas where the MHWC can add the most value to our collective understanding of mental health and wellbeing. I ask in particular in this regard that you work with the Ministry to ensure that your combined monitoring expectations and requirements for Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand) are aligned as far as possible, to reduce the risk of duplication and ensure that the impact on Health New Zealand is proportionate.

This includes in relation to the mental health and addiction targets. While you will not need to duplicate the Ministry's monitoring of the targets, you can provide analysis and views on trends and patterns and how they relate to need. You can also continue to advocate for the importance of robust data and continuous improvement. MHWC will need to support Health New Zealand to investigate reasons behind these trends and support performance improvement.

The code of expectations for health entities' engagement with consumers and whānau (the Code) remains an important aspect. Although you are not legislatively required to comply to the Code, I ask that you continue to consider how the principles and intent of the Code can be built into your work when engaging with consumers and whānau and continue reporting on this via your Annual Reports if you deem it appropriate to do so.

I ask you to provide a draft of your Statement of Performance Expectations for 2024/25 to your contact at the Ministry of Health by 30 April 2024. I also ask that you update your current Statement of Intent to demonstrate how your current priorities align with the new priorities of this Government. I ask you to liaise with the Ministry regarding an agreed timeframe for when an updated Statement of Intent can be provided.

Yours sincerely



Hon Matt Doocey
Minister for Mental Health

cc Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health
Dr Diana Sarfati, Director-General of Health, Ministry of Health
Karen Orsborn, Chief Executive, Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission