

The National Party

Summary: There are good opportunities to build on positive work and to explore new initiatives. However, it is unclear how far these various pilots will go to address existing stresses on the system and not burdening it further. All policies announced are those already included in Budget 2017 with funding allocated.

Mental health

- Increasing one stop youth shops is a positive step as these are proven to be successful. However there are some 'reality checks' associated with this idea (see red box on next page).
- Investing \$4 million to support people in an acute mental health crisis to sustain their tenancy has good evidence to show that this will create positive outcomes.
- Investing in follow-up for those who attempt suicide is of course a good investment. However there are some 'reality checks' associated with this idea (see red box on next page).
- Piloting a multi-agency co-response in two urban and one rural area for emergency calls requiring a mental health response is a good idea. However there are some 'reality checks' associated with this idea (see red box on next page).
- \$8 million in Vote Maori Development to extend the Rangatahi Suicide Prevention fund is important.
- Piloting trauma-focused services is good to understand how appropriate the suggested services are for the New Zealand context. There are already existing services in New Zealand using trauma informed approaches with young children and families.

Addictions

- Increasing investment in alcohol and other drug support services for young unemployed people, offenders and first-time remandees is needed if it is directed at supporting recovery.
- There are no cohesive alcohol and other drug policies to review.



Reality checks...

- The complex drivers of addiction are not adequately understood or articulated in these policies. For instance, young unemployed youth may be experiencing addiction and unemployment for a range of reasons. There appears to be no connection articulated between the 'More support and obligations for unemployed youth' policy and other youth-focussed policies or the policy to support people experiencing crisis to sustain tenancies. Contemporary addiction support does not use punitive approaches to support people to recover.

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Mental health

- While ensuring an array of support services is available to people, it is unclear why there will be a large (\$10 million) investment going toward more e-therapy options. There are already numerous existing e-therapies (shown together on the 'More information page' of the it matters website www.itmatters.org.nz).
- While experts felt that increased access for under 25s was a good initiative, there is a question around where the initiatives are for other age groups also experiencing high need.



Reality checks...

- It is good that National values youth one-stop shops, but it has been widely publicised that existing youth services are struggling to secure funding from DHBs to meet demand and there has been no attempts by Ministers or the Ministry of Health to safeguard funding.
- In relation to following up on people who have attempted suicide, it is unclear how this would be coordinated. It is also unclear why there would be a need for "alternative or additional forms of support for people who have attempted suicide or are at risk of suicide" when often people who are known to be at risk are unable to access existing services due to thresholds (because of a lack of capacity). Follow-up support suggests that initial support has been able to be accessed.
- Without significant increase in the capacity of the workforce, this proposed investment in school based mental health services and is not going to result in improved access.
- School based health practitioners would still be referring young people to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) that is failing to see many young people currently.
- The emergency response pilot has good evidence of urgent need on the basis of police callout statistics. However, crisis teams should be responding to calls of this nature. Anecdotally people contact the police because of a lack of responsiveness from crisis teams.

A take home point from our experts...

National may see the value in many initiatives that have proven results, but without holding DHBs to account to fund or deliver these services, it is likely that they will be inadequately implemented. There is currently a constant trend that sees effective services with clear demand and proven outcomes struggling to secure funding, and there has historically been no support from National-led government to ensure that there is follow through implementation of policy.