



# Better Mental Health

National believes in better mental health for all New Zealanders. We will ensure all New Zealanders can access better mental health care, sooner and closer to home.

National understands mental health is just as important as physical health. We believe Kiwis should have access to world class mental health care and we will deliver more frontline mental health services to respond to the growing demand.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the response needed to contain it, has been a stress on our country and our people. Now more than ever, we have seen the connection between a strong economy, low unemployment and secure incomes in promoting better mental health. For many of us, having work helps provide us a purpose. To improve mental health in New Zealand we need to get the economy going again and get people back into work and earning. But we also need to deliver more frontline mental health services sooner and closer to home.

One in five Kiwis experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lives, and nearly nine per cent of adults experience psychological distress every month.

In 2019, \$1.9 billion was allocated to mental health. However, Labour has failed to get the money out the door to help New Zealanders in need. We will seek to maintain these initiatives but ensure the money gets to those who need it. We will also use the unspent money from the \$1.9 billion to help fund our initiatives.

National's focus will be on delivering more frontline services to respond to the growing demand for mental health services in New Zealand. Ensuring all New Zealanders have equal access to services and to end the post code lottery for access to mental health services.

To respond to the growing need for mental health services and to reduce waiting time to access help, National will:

1. Better manage the mental health system to deliver more frontline mental health services and respond to the growing demand from New Zealanders.
2. Support New Zealanders to better manage their own mental health to reduce mental illness.
3. Address mental wellbeing at the grassroots.



# 1. Better manage the mental health system, delivering more frontline mental health services and responding to the growing demand from New Zealanders

National believes Kiwis deserve world class mental health care. To achieve this we will change the way mental health and addiction services are commissioned and delivered in New Zealand by implementing a national stepped care approach to mental health services. We will ensure New Zealand has a competent and fully equipped workforce. We will drive accountability with New Zealand's first Minister for Mental Health.

## Driving our strategy

National will establish New Zealand's first stand-alone Minister for Mental Health to drive our comprehensive strategy and better manage the mental health system. Mental health is bigger than just health, other government departments are also part of the solution like education, housing, criminal justice and social development to name a few. That's why a National Minister for Mental Health will take responsibility for implementing cross-government system wide reboot of the government mental health and addiction strategy and they will be accountable for delivering results.

They will be the responsible minister for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, the Suicide Prevention Office and the recommendations from He Ara Oranga Inquiry into mental health and addictions.

To reach this goal we are committed to re-establishing and reporting on National Health Targets. So that Kiwis can see the results and have confidence in the services being provided to them. Targets require healthcare providers to focus on the outcomes that are important to Kiwis.

## Commissioning and Delivery of Services

A national stepped care approach will remove the current postcode lottery. It will result in a timely, integrated and seamless network of mental health and addiction services across New Zealand.

A stepped care approach to mental health is a collaborative model that requires DHBs, PHOs and NGOs to work together to provide a seamless pathway of care along a range of mental health and addiction services. Including:

- Cultural specific services including for; tikanga Māori, Pasifika and Asian services.
- Services throughout your life; from postnatal, to young adults, to seniors.
- Types of services; from inpatient, to peer-led lived experience services, and face to face to online services.

The implementation of a stepped care approach to mental health will identify the current gaps within the current care approach. DHBs will be required to formulate an action plan to address the identified gaps, with progress of these action plans monitored by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.

## The Mental Health Workforce

National's goal of delivering more front line services and increasing access to mental health services for New Zealanders will require a competent workforce that can make a difference in people's lives.

We need to continually build resilience and upskill our current mental health workforce as well as attract new graduates into the mental health profession. We also need to provide training pathways for our peer-to-peer and lived experience workforce.



In line with our Health Workforce strategy, we will make Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) independent of the Ministry of Health. National will support HWNZ to identify the looming gaps in our mental health workforce and engage with tertiary education providers to ensure the pipeline fills those gaps.

## Building an evidence base of what works

National will fund a new, fit for purpose baseline study of children and young people. This will enable us to understand the context and conditions underpinning the mental health of New Zealand's youth and help inform the next generation of mental health services. The cost of this research will be \$3m over 4 years.

With a global trend of increasing psychological distress in young people there is a need for understanding the underlying causes so that the next generation of mental health services are able to address these causes through prevention and intervention. With New Zealand following this international trend of increasing psychological distress in our young people National believes the way to address this trend is by taking an evidence-based approach.

National is committed to undertaking research in mental health to build an evidence base of what works in New Zealand. Some say that mental health is 50 years behind physical health. With all the developments in physical health over the last 50 years, mental health has a long way to go to catch up.

Currently in New Zealand we are hindered by a lack of national routine monitoring of youth mental wellbeing. By identifying and understanding the context and conditions underpinning youth mental health we can develop interventions to support better mental wellbeing in our children and young people. With an evidence baseline of national mental health and wellbeing, we will be able to know when we are making a difference.

### National will:

- Establish New Zealand's first Minister for Mental Health to drive our comprehensive mental health strategy and to be accountable for delivering more frontline mental health services.
- Implement a 'national stepped care approach' for commissioning and delivering services to provide a timely, integrated and seamless network of mental health services in every region.
- Support an independent Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) to prioritise the mental health workforce by identifying the looming gaps in our mental health workforce and engage with tertiary education providers to ensure enough students are coming through to fill those gaps in the future.
- Fund a primary care navigator for every General Practice location in New Zealand to project care even further into the community and closer to home.
- Fund a new, fit for purpose baseline study of children and young people to understand the context and conditions underpinning the mental health of young New Zealanders to inform the next generation of mental health services.



## 2. Support New Zealanders to better manage their own mental health to reduce mental illness

A National Government will deliver better care, sooner, so that New Zealanders can access high quality services faster and easier. Allowing New Zealanders to better manage their own mental health.

National will ensure that all New Zealanders can access high quality mental health services, no matter where they live. Mental health is just as important as physical health but average wait times have ballooned under the current government. We will address this and provide new ways for New Zealanders to manage their mental health.

### Covid-19

Covid-19 has not been easy for many New Zealanders with job losses, economic uncertainty and more stress on families leading to Kiwis needing more mental health assistance than usual.

Counsellors are seeing a growing number of referrals as a result of the impacts of Covid-19, but are being told by DHBs there is no funding available to respond to this growing demand.

To address this, National will urgently fund 100,000 free counselling sessions to respond to the growing mental distress caused by Covid-19 from underspent mental health funding announced in Budget 2019. National was successful in providing similar support after the Canterbury earthquakes, which delivered over 50,000 free counselling sessions.

### Maternity Care

In New Zealand, new mums have faced challenges accessing existing mental health services. In the first few days after giving birth, mums can experience the “baby blues”, have difficulty breastfeeding, be exhausted and sometimes just need a bit of extra help to build up confidence.

At times the current system does not provide the level of support mother’s need, with over eight per cent of new mothers in New Zealand experiencing postnatal depression or anxiety symptoms. That is around 4800 mothers potentially without access to proper care.

National will ensure that if a new mum needs some help, she can get it. This will not only help new mums but will help ensure that our youngest New Zealanders get the best start in life and is just one part of how we are supporting new mums and babies during the crucial first 1,000 days.

National will introduce funding to allow a woman experiencing postnatal symptoms to visit their GP. Allowing time to talk through symptoms, and be assessed to determine the next course of support or treatment. This includes referrals to the frontline mental health service and secondary services.

National is also committed to expanding resources to key organisations such as Plunket to enhance the education available surrounding postnatal depression, symptoms and treatments involved.

### Small Business

New Zealand is a nation of small businesses. Over half a million Kiwis own or work for a small business. National is the party of small business and we will fund a \$10 million mental health support package for small businesses to ensure owners and their employees can have access to the support they need.

Owning a small business can be tough at the best of times, and even more so during the Covid-19 pandemic. The hours are often long and stressful and there are currently few support structures in place for owners. Being responsible for everything to do with the business, the lines between personal and work pressures become blurred or non-existent. Most large businesses have access to employee assistance programmes, but the cost can put this out of reach for most small businesses.

National will partner with BusinessNZ network, regional Chambers of Commerce and



Economic Development Agencies, to support those small businesses where mental health has been identified as a concern, and to engage with the small business to ensure they receive mental health support tailored to their needs.

## Rural Communities

National will partner with Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand, in response to the Government's reduced funding in this area, to provide life-saving mental health and suicide prevention workshops in our rural communities.

While progress has been made in reducing urban suicides, rural suicide numbers are tragically increasing. We will fund the Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand to develop a Rural Mental Health Network to mobilise grassroots rural community groups to provide life-saving mental health and suicide prevention workshops to our rural communities.

This fund will also provide vital professional development training for our frontline workers such as health, education, social care and emergency services workers in our rural communities. Ensuring they are better equipped to respond to the mental health pressures faced by some in our rural communities.

## Addiction Treatment

Addressing New Zealand's methamphetamine problem will require cooperation between government agencies, NGOs across the health and justice sectors, and the community.

National's plan will deliver an all-of-community approach tackling the harm of methamphetamine. Addressing the harm of methamphetamine use in the community means we must provide support to those who fall victim to this drug.

Matrix is an intensive rehabilitation programme that provides wraparound support within communities, families and workplaces for patients who receive treatment. It couples training for those breaking the addiction of methamphetamine with a wraparound and structured social support programme.

### National will:

- Urgently fund 100,000 free counselling sessions to respond to the growing mental distress as a result of Covid-19.
- Provide free GP assessments for perinatal and postnatal depression and follow up support.
- Establish a \$10 million mental health support package for small businesses where mental health has been identified as a concern.
- Fund life-saving mental wellbeing and suicide prevention workshops in our rural communities.



### 3. Address mental wellbeing at the grassroots

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the response needed to contain it has been a stress on our country all the way down to the grassroots. Now more than ever, we have seen the connection between a strong economy, low unemployment and secure incomes in promoting better mental health.

National will invest in efforts to boost mental wellbeing and resilience in the community. These programmes are aimed at ensuring all New Zealanders have the tools available to them to manage their mental wellbeing during difficult times.

#### Zero Suicide approach

Suicides are preventable and the consequences for whanau, friends, workplaces, schools and communities are huge. To address this, National will commit to a nationwide 'Zero Suicide' prevention strategy, with an ultimate goal of reducing suicides in New Zealand to zero.

Access to mental health services is critical for suicide prevention. However, it is not sufficient in and of itself. A comprehensive strategy must also look at other factors that contribute to suicidal behaviour - financial distress, relationship breakdown, childhood adversity, discrimination, and overuse of alcohol and other drugs to manage stress.

The Zero Suicide Framework applies a quality improvement and safety approach to the prevention of suicide throughout the entire health system. The Zero Suicide approach has been introduced internationally including in Australia, the US, and the UK, and seeks to provide leading best practice crisis care and support, building on local community resilience and improving systems and practices to reduce the suicide rate.

#### Psychological First Aid

National will increase access to psychological first aid training. We will invest in a \$10 million contestable fund to establish free psychological first aid training. As mental and emotional distress increases as a result of self-isolation or the continuing effects of Covid-19, it's important that we are all prepared to support our friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues.

Psychological first aid training will teach New Zealanders how to identify and respond to mental distress in their family, friends, and work colleagues. It is designed to reduce the early negative psychological effects and to foster both short and long-term resilience and capacity to cope.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased stress for all New Zealanders. Psychological first aid will be an important first line of defence in addressing the growing mental and emotional distress in New Zealand including the impacts of Covid related job losses.

#### Increasing Resilience in our Young

The mental health debate in New Zealand is partly being driven by young people who have a willingness to talk about mental health that older generations never had. Unlike older New Zealanders, our young people feel less stigma talking openly about their mental health challenges and are less hesitant to seek support. The number of Kiwis with mental illness is growing in all age groups, but it is growing fastest amongst the young.

Most kids have their own phone or access to digital communications, and there is growing concern from parents and the wider community about cyberbullying. Bullying has always been there but now it is very hard to escape. Kids increasingly communicate in ways that are little known to adults and free from supervision. Because of this, cyberbullying can happen anytime anywhere. The nature of technology also means this can be seen by a wide audience almost instantly and can be permanent.



Students who are taught resilience and specific techniques for managing stress and anxiety report that their wellbeing dramatically improves. National believes resilience training will make sure all Kiwi kids have the best chance in life and will offer lifelong improvements to their wellbeing. Addressing resilience training while young can also help stave off lifelong mental health problems. Of those with lifelong mental health issues, 50 per cent have symptoms before the age of 14 and 75 per cent before the age of 24.

## eMental Health

Fund a nationwide eMental Health Campaign to increase the level of access for New Zealanders to eMental Health tools and mental health resources.

We believe that in supporting better mental health for New Zealanders we need to not only focus on treating mental illness but also focus on promoting mental wellbeing and resilience.

National believes that a nationwide mental health wellbeing promotion campaign that would scale up the 'It's Alright Campaign', introduced following the Christchurch earthquakes, to a national level will increase access to eMental health tools and resources.

We know that self-paced eMental health tools are an important way of educating New Zealanders about promoting their own mental wellbeing and learning skills to deal with the day to day pressures in life. Thousands of Kiwis are currently using eMental Health tools to deal with stress, anxiety and other issues before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. By supporting a nationwide eMental Health Campaign delivered through social media and community mental health initiatives, we can encourage thousands more New Zealanders to take the first steps in managing their own mental health better.

### National will:

- Commit to a nationwide 'Zero Suicides' comprehensive multi-sector suicide prevention strategy.
- Establish a \$10 million contestable fund for free psychological first aid training for New Zealanders as an important first line of defence to responding to mental distress in our communities.
- Require schools to deliver a skills based mental health and resilience training program from years 1 to 13 to promote mental wellbeing with a focus on cyberbullying and how to build cyber resilience.
- Fund a nationwide mental health wellbeing promotion campaign that would scale up Canterbury's successful post-earthquakes 'All Right' campaign to a national level in response to the impacts of Covid-19.



## Additional Spending (\$m)

	Four Year Cost
Minister for Mental Health	2
Implement stepped care approach	2
Youth Mental Health Study	3
Covid-19 Counselling Sessions	11
Maternity Support	10
Small Business Support Package	10
Rural Community Support	16
Suicide Prevention Strategy	40
Psychological First Aid Fund	10
National Mental Health Promotion Campaign	12
Methamphetamine Addiction Treatment	63
Total	179