



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

Media Release

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For immediate release

Attention: Health Reporters

Health workforce shortage policy does not go far enough

The New Zealand Psychological Society congratulates the Minister of Health in taking the initiative to address workforce shortages in medicine, nursing and midwifery. Student loan debt write-offs, and cash incentives to graduates to work in hard to staff communities for three to five years is likely to provide encouragement to these professionals to work in New Zealand.

The New Zealand Psychological Society believes that this scheme needs to be extended to psychologists to ensure that staffing in mental healthcare is sufficient for New Zealanders to access the mental health services they need when and where they need them. Psychologists have an especially important role to play in primary mental health care working as part of the mental health team which includes general practitioners and others.

Evidence shows that inclusion of psychological therapies delivered by psychologists, across the board in health care, significantly improves outcomes,

reduces relapse, and is highly cost effective, but there are major problems accessing psychologists in many health settings.

Both clinical psychologists and educational psychologists are identified by the New Zealand Immigration Service as being in short supply in New Zealand. Shortages of psychologists in DHBs, special education and other areas are having a serious impact on access to services. The findings from the global burden of disease report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) released in October 2008 found that neuropsychiatric conditions are amongst the leading causes of disability in all regions of the world and they account for approximately one third of “years lost to disability” among people older than 14 years. ¹

The Society urges the Government to broaden its policy on incentives for health professionals to include psychologists and in doing so to reap the health and financial rewards of well-staffed mental health services.

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Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society

The New Zealand Psychological Society is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 900 members and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology. See www.psychology.org.nz for more information about the Society.

Contacts

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¹ See <http://pn.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/44/1/7> for more information.