



## The New Zealand Psychological Society

*Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa*

### Media Release

26 February, 2016

For immediate release-

#### Attention: Health and Social Issues Reporters

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPSS) is deeply concerned about planned cutbacks to mental health services in Canterbury. President of the NZPSS, Dr Kerry Gibson, said that she found it hard to believe that cuts are being considered for these essential services, especially with the unique mental health needs of the area related to the trauma that people have experienced as a result of the earthquakes and ongoing difficulties with the process of the rebuild.

“Mental services are under-funded throughout the country and to cut them further in an area where we know that psychological needs are higher seems particularly short-sighted,” she said.

“Recent research has shown that people exposed to the quakes in Canterbury were more likely to experience mental health problems and these effects were likely to be long term” she added.

Dr Gibson said the on-going aftershocks in Canterbury, including the recent large ones, meant that people would be likely to experience a re-activation of trauma. This reaction was on top of the long term effects of exposure to the earthquakes as well as to the disruptions associated with these.

“Over time these stressors can drain people’s emotional resources and make them more likely to experience mental health problems,” she said.

She said, that while some people were able to recover from trauma using their own resources and support from whanau and friends, psychologists played an important role in assisting people to develop good coping strategies that helped them deal with past exposure to trauma and also enabled them to be more resilient in dealing with future stress.

“The formal mental health services delivered by the DHB are a vital resource for those dealing with more severe mental health problems”, she added.

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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 1500 members and subscribers and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and excellence in the practice of psychology.