

Media Release

September 12, 2019

For immediate release

DHB psychologists strike – home-grown solution needed

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS) says the current partial strike by 600 psychologists working in district health boards is a sign that temporary fixes to ongoing workforce shortages in the profession are not working.

“We need a strategic, cross-sector, home-grown solution that can develop the much-needed psychology workforce and service the increasing needs of our communities. NZ needs around 300 more psychologists just to keep up with current demands in the DHBs,” comments NZPS president, Dr John Fitzgerald.

“To put workforce development into context, it takes up to eight years to train a clinical psychologist and there are about 70 graduates per year. Plus, there is an urgent need for more Māori and Pasifika psychologists.”

The Society has been advocating for Ministers and Ministries to put more resources into the tertiary sector to urgently step up education and training for clinical psychologists.

Taking a strategic approach to ensure workforce sustainability by retaining experienced staff, who should be valued for their skill and contributions to the role, is vital. Also, ensuring that there are supportive workplace environments that value and prioritise Māori and Pasifika knowledge and practices is essential for retaining the limited numbers of Māori and Pasifika psychologist within DHBs.

“We regularly survey our members and the issues that keep coming up are inadequate pay, workload and lack of structure for career progression. Our members tell us they want to help people in the public sector, but it just takes a high toll on them and they can get better conditions elsewhere.

“We don’t want to see further erosion of the DHB psychology workforce, we need to find a lasting solution.”

Ends

Background to the New Zealand Psychological Society

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has around 2000 members, including students, and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology.