



The New Zealand Psychological Society

*Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa*

## **Media Release**

**Thursday 2 June, 2011**

**For immediate release**

**Attention: Science, Health and Social Issues Reporters**

### **Integrated services for adolescents urgently needed to reduce social and psychological morbidity**

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) welcomes Sir Peter Gluckman's report to the Prime Minister which makes recommendations on reducing social and psychological morbidity during adolescence. This is an important step towards making adolescent issues more visible and addressing the needs of this group more effectively. To ensure that adolescents grow into healthy and productive adults we need to make sure that they are well supported through their journey into adulthood.

We agree on the importance of targeting adolescence as a period in which some young people may be at risk of a range of psychological and social difficulties. Currently the services available to assist adolescents with psychological and social issues are inadequate. Mental health and related services are severely under-resourced to meet the needs of young people experiencing difficulties with support being limited to those who are already showing signs of significant levels of disturbance or to those in crisis or at imminent risk of harm. Some young people only eventually receive help when they transgress the law and fall into the youth justice system.

We therefore welcome Sir Peter Gluckman's recommendation that the Government act proactively to prevent problems in adolescence rather than tackling the much more difficult task of rehabilitation after problems have become entrenched. Whilst we agree that it may be most effective to target programmes towards 'at risk' youth we would want to ensure that this does not exclude making appropriate supports available more broadly to adolescents who may not fall into this category. Support for at risk families/whanau is a vital first step in preventing the manifestation of wide-ranging problems experienced by young people.

We also support Sir Peter's suggestion that evidence based programmes be used to address adolescents needs more effectively. It is important, however, that attempts are made to adapt

these to the needs of the local New Zealand culture – especially to Māori and Pasifika adolescents.

We agree that addressing adolescents' needs effectively cannot be held hostage to the whim of any particular government and that addressing the needs of this group will require a commitment to sustaining evidence-based programmes and policies over a long period. It is also very important to work towards greater integration of support systems available to young people which will require action that extends across the Ministries of Health, Social Development and Education as well as the NGO sector. This may need to be coordinated through an independent body set up for the purpose.

*End*

### **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 over 1000 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](http://www.psychology.org.nz) for more information about the Society.

### **Contacts**

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