



# PSA Submission

## He Ara Āwhina Framework Consultation

By the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

April 2022

## About the PSA

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 81,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities), state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

The PSA has been advocating for strong, innovative and effective public and community services since our establishment in 1913. People join the PSA to negotiate their terms of employment collectively, to have a voice within their workplace and to have an independent public voice on the quality of public and community services and how they're delivered.

The PSA is affiliated to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) Te Kauae Kaimahi, Public Services International (PSI), and UniGlobal.

## Our values

### Solidarity - Kotahitanga

We champion members' interests with a strong effective voice. We stand together, supporting and empowering members, individually and collectively.

### Social justice - Pāpori Ture Tika

We take a stand for decent treatment and justice. We embrace diversity and challenge inequality.

### Integrity and respect - Te Pono me te Whakaute

Our actions are characterised by professionalism, integrity and respect.

### Solution focused - Otinga Arotahi

We are a progressive and constructive union, constantly seeking solutions that improve members' working lives.

### Democratic - Tā te Nuinga e Whakatau ai

We encourage participation from members. We aim to be transparent, accessible and inclusive in the way we work.

## This submission

This submission has been developed by the **Mental Health and Addictions Committee (MHAC)** of the PSA which comprises members working in mental health services in DHBs, in the community, and in core public service agencies. In preparing this submission we sought feedback from PSA members working in mental health. They provide feedback from the perspective of a person providing mental health and addition supports and services.

The PSA has a historic connection to mental health services. Our membership in the sector goes back to the days when mental health services were delivered directly by the Department of Health and the range of our membership has expanded since those days. We have been actively involved in advocating for better mental health and addiction services for many years, and in the 1990s were part of a movement that led to the Mason Report and the publication of the original *Blueprint for Mental Health Services in New Zealand*. More recently we have made a submission on *He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction*. We have also submitted on subsequent pieces of legislation and strategic policy documents related to implementing the recommendations of He Ara Oranga.

## Summary

The PSA supports the He Ara Āwhina Framework and its ambitious goal to create 'a whānau dynamic mental health and addiction system which allows all whānau to navigate distress, reduce harm from substances and harm from gambling, and lead our wellbeing and recovery.' We do however believe that some adjustments to the framework are required to achieve its ambitious goal.

We recommend considering the following adjustments:

- Balancing lived experience with professional experience in the framework
- Using the framework also to identify and monitor workforce development needs
- Making worker participation an integral part of the framework

## The PSA's position

### Does He Ara Āwhina reflect your hopes for a mental health and addiction system?

The PSA supports the He Ara Āwhina Framework and its ambitious goal to enable whānau to lead their own wellbeing and recovery. We also support that the framework is used to:

- monitor mental health and addiction services
- monitor changes as the mental health and addiction system transforms
- advocate for improvements to the mental health and addiction system, including services.

We particularly welcome the te ao Māori perspective and a focus on creating a mental health and addiction system that upholds and supports tangata whaiora and all whānau through enabling the workforce by ensuring they are well supported.

We believe that a person-centred and rights-based approach would enhance service delivery. However (as mentioned in the next section) workforce and union engagement would increase the likelihood of well resourced, appropriate services. This includes having an appropriate funding model that is not a contestable model. Funding for mental health and addiction services needs to promote an integrated system of services across hospitals, community services and Māori and iwi providers.

### Is He Ara Āwhina missing anything that is important to you?

We know that the **voice of the workforce** plays a crucial role in enabling all whānau to navigate mental challenges and to lead their own wellbeing and recovery. Workers' professional expertise, skills and experience in providing effective and meaningful services should have a place in He Ara Āwhina . Services can be best improved if different perspectives are brought to the table. In this case lived experience and professional experience, i.e. whānau and workers.

Based on balancing lived experience with professional experience in the framework, it could also be used to identify longer term **workforce development needs** in addition to and based on monitoring services and changes and recommending improvements. This includes training as well as retaining and attracting staff into decent, secure and safe workplaces. For instance, training and education is key to successful outcomes for whānau. The future workforce needs strong knowledge and awareness of te ao Māori, biculturalism and Te Tiriti partnership. All staff need to be culturally

aware, have sound knowledge and be supported to work in a space that is conducive to hauora hinengaro including the management teams. All workers including managers and CEOs need to step up and lead the transformation.

To enable this transformation **regular and ongoing worker participation** should be an integral part of the mental health and addiction system to harness workers' professional expertise and experience, to create awareness and understanding as well as ownership of He Ara Āwhina.

Is there anything else you want us to know about how we should monitor services and system transformation?

Goals in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi should outline the relationship with Tangata Whenua who are the point of reference for reducing inequities in the mental health and addiction system for Māori and with Māori.

Thank you for considering our submission.

For further information, please contact:

Andrea Fromm  
Senior Advisor  
Policy and Strategy  
New Zealand Public Service Association  
PO Box 3817  
Wellington 6140

Phone: 027 5816170

Email: [andrea.fromm@psa.org.nz](mailto:andrea.fromm@psa.org.nz)