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Tēnā koe Ms Willis and Mr Brown

The Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi is the country's largest union and represents some 83,000 people working in public and community services.

Our members hear a consistent message from National regarding your party's aim to reduce the number of public servants, with a particular focus on the 14,000 additional roles created since 2017.

Just this week on Morning Report Ms Willis said, "We will be reducing the amount of money tied up in the backroom bureaucracy" and specifically mentioned roles in human resources and policy advice that could be cut by a National led government.

National has of late consistently talked about shifting resources from the backroom to the frontline.

These comments are alarming to our members, and we think to the many New Zealanders who depend on the services public servants provide. They are also misleading.

I am therefore writing to provide some facts for you to consider and I also request a meeting with you both to explain our concerns about a policy we believe is flawed and reckless at this time of great challenge for many New Zealanders.

Of the 14,000 additional jobs, around 1000 are in policy advice and 300 in HR. That leaves more than 12,700 roles to cut. Most of the growth in FTEs over this period has been in the jobs that directly deliver services that improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders, provide support to businesses and cater for our growing population.

Do you have a plan to remove these frontline roles and if so, what are they? Are you saying we need fewer corrections officers who keep our prisons secure? Are you saying we can do with fewer social workers who support our most vulnerable? Are you saying we should cut the number of scientists who protect New Zealand from bio-security threats?

Roles in human resources and policy advice are vital for an efficient public service.

Policy analysts develop government policies and provide advice and briefings to Ministers and Senior Management. They do this by evaluating, researching, and consulting with stakeholders, which will then inform the best advice for the government to adopt. This includes assessing the impact of government policies and decisions and their impact on people, communities and stakeholders like businesses and farmers. Making

Government decisions without sound policy advice will lead to worse decisions and worse outcomes for the people of New Zealand. And will waste money.

Human resources advisers are responsible for recruitment advice, performance management and pay, wellbeing and health and safety, training and development, employment relations and policies for the staff of an organisation. If nobody does these jobs no new people can be recruited and there would be no training - so services and the people who need them will suffer. There would be no one looking after wellness, or health and safety so public service workers would be worse off too.

Our public service is not bloated as National claims. The number of people working for public services has actually decreased compared to the population. In 2008 there was one public servant for every 100 New Zealanders. Now there is one public servant for every 102 New Zealanders. Does National want New Zealanders to have their public services delivered by fewer workers than when John Key was PM?

New Zealand has one of the most trusted public service sectors in the world, and a public service broadly proportionate in size to the equivalent UK and Australian public sectors.

This is a public sector delivering quality services to a growing and aging population; one that saved lives and helped get New Zealand through the pandemic. If we are to tackle long-term challenges to New Zealand such as climate change, the cost of living, rebuilding core services including health and education, and investing in the infrastructure to drive a more productive economy, we need a strong public service not one that has been cut off at the knee.

New Zealanders deserve to know what public services are on the line if National becomes government. Who will bear the cost and what services will go as a result?

New Zealanders deserve accurate information from National so we can have an informed debate based on facts and not fiction.

People working in public services deserve to know whether their jobs are on the line. Each of the 14,000 are people. They have families. Times are tough for everyone now and job insecurity just adds to that burden.

I hope you find this information of value and look forward to discussing this further at a time that is convenient.

Given the urgency of this issue, I respectfully request a meeting with one or both of you this year.

I look forward to hearing back.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Davies', written in a cursive style.

Kerry Davies
PSA national secretary