

13 December 2024

Manatū Hauora | Ministry of Health
133 Molesworth Street
Thorndon, Wellington 6011

By email to: LTIB@health.govt.nz

Tēnā koe

Re: Public consultation on a topic for a Long-term Insights Briefing

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Manatū Hauora's consultation on a topic for a Long-term Insights Briefing.

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical specialty of psychiatry in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia and is responsible for training, educating, and representing psychiatrists. The RANZCP has over 8400 members, including more than 5900 qualified psychiatrists and is guided on policy matters by a range of expert committees. This submission has been prepared in consultation with Tu Te Akaaka Roa, the New Zealand National Committee, the Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry, and the RANZCP's Transition to Retirement Working Group.

Tu Te Akaaka Roa supports the proposed topic and focus areas of Manatū Hauora's long-term insights briefing and we provide specific recommendation for potential targets that warrant exploration as part of the evidence brief. Specifically, we recommend:

- A strong focus on supporting mental health services, including workforce development and pathways of care,
- Promoting wellbeing and transition to retirement in the health workforce.

A strong focus on supporting mental health services

We support the identified topic area of health protective factors and behaviours and recommend a strong focus on mental wellbeing and barriers for accessing mental health support.

The 2021 Global Burden of Disease Study identified mental illness as one of the five leading causes of health loss in Aotearoa New Zealand, contributing substantially to disability and shortened life expectancy. [1] While mental health promotion strategies for older adults focus on supporting healthy ageing, ensuring access to high-quality mental health support services is a critical aspect ensuring long-term wellbeing of our communities. Untreated and delayed treatment of mental illness can have significant impacts on older peoples' physical health, independence and social connection, and comes at significant cost to individuals, family and communities.[2] Older people often have complex needs, and, unfortunately, tāngata whai ora of advanced age are often unable to access adequate support due to the limited number of specialists, such as old age psychiatrists, who are able consider the impact of physical

comorbidity and altered pharmacokinetics on older persons' mental health conditions. [3]

We recommend Manatū Hauora consider options for attracting and retaining a skilled specialist workforce to support older people with mental health concerns, particularly old age psychiatrists, and explore pathways of care that allow for improved liaison between mental health, social services and community providers.

Promoting wellbeing and transition to retirement in the health workforce

We tautoko the focus on active ageing in the health workforce and recommend broader exploration of health promoting factors in the health professionals. The RANZCP established a Transition to Retirement Working Group in 2022 to identify issues and specific needs of retired psychiatrists and those approaching the end of their working careers. As part of this mahi, we conducted a college-wide survey of RANZCP members over the age of 55, and in-depth interviews of psychiatrists in, or near, retirement which revealed some potential targets to support active ageing in the health workforce. Survey participants and interviewees noted work-related stress, mental health, age-concerns, and limited work opportunities as some of the drivers for retirement from clinical practice; participants also expressed a desire to continue to contribute to the development and delivery of health services, for example through teaching or mentoring. Similar issues were raised in a national survey of NZ-based RANZCP members who have left the public sector to work in private practice, and several published studies. [4-6] Based on our evaluation of the current barriers and opportunities, we recommend Manatū Hauora consider:

- Options for flexible work, such as part-time roles and less or zero on-call requirements. These are currently limited due to on-call mandates in public psychiatry practice and increasing workforce shortages.[7]
- Working with the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) and other regulating bodies to update regulations (e.g., scopes and definitions of practice and clinical practice) to permit retired practitioners to continue teaching, research, mentoring and other opportunities that enable a sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- Health promoting initiatives to address the work-related stress and burnout in the health workforce.

These changes may enable health professionals to gradually reduce or adapt their workload and thus reduce the potential for burnout within their health service. Given more flexibility regarding activities retired medical professionals can participate in, we believe health workers would continue to share their skills and knowledge and support Manatū Hauora's vision of active ageing in the health workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback; we look forward to working with Manatū Hauora in the future. If you have any further questions regarding this letter, please contact the New Zealand National Office - Tu Te Akaaka Roa via nzoffice@ranzcp.org or on +64 (0)4 472 7247.

Ngā manaakitanga



Dr Hiran Thabrew
National Chair, Tu Te Akaaka Roa

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