



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

27 May, 2016

Hon Jonathan Coleman
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Minister

Extension of voluntary bonding scheme to psychologists

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) is pleased to see a continuation of the Government's initiative for addressing workforce shortages through the voluntary bonding scheme for graduates to work in hard-to-staff areas. We noted in a letter in 2011 to the then Minister of Health, that we considered that it would be beneficial for this scheme to be extended to psychologists to assist in the workforce shortages which were, and still are impacting on the provision of services for those with mental health needs in hard-to-staff areas.

As you will be aware, psychologists make a significant contribution to mental health services in Aotearoa New Zealand and there are geographical regions and clinical subspecialties in which there are recruitment and retention difficulties. There are shortages in many areas including primary care and acute in forensic mental health.

General practitioners (GPs) are treating increasing numbers of mental health patients and many indicate that they are lacking both the training and resources to deal with these patients.ⁱ Psychologists have extensive training in working with patients with mental health needs and could be more fully utilised in primary care and other areas of healthcare. Placing bonded psychology graduates in hard-to-staff areas would be a cost-effective way to assist the situation of increasing demand for mental health services and increasingly overburdened general practitioners. There is some evidence to suggest that voluntary bonding not infrequently encourages graduates to stay on in hard-to-staff areas after their bonding

period has been completed. This is particularly important for the more rural and remote areas.

We ask that you consider an extension to the voluntary bonding scheme to include psychologist graduates. We believe that an investment in psychologists through their participation in this scheme will bring important and cost effective benefits to the provision of mental health services in hard-to-staff areas.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Gibson
President

ⁱ GPs willing but ill-equipped for mental healthcare role. Cliff Taylor. *New Zealand Doctor*, 11 May, 2016 p.6