

Briefing

Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission advice on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Date due to MO:	23/02/2026	Action required by:	3/03/2026
Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Briefing number:	BN2026-003
To:	Hon Matt Doocey, Minister for Mental Health		
Copy to:	Stephanie Buick, Principal Advisor System Planning & Accountability, Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora		

Contact for Telephone Discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Karen Orsborn	Chief Executive	
Ella Cullen	Director – Wellbeing System Leadership & Insights	

Minister's Office to Complete

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|--|------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Approved | ☐ Decline | ☐ Noted |
| ☐ Needs change | ☐ Seen | ☐ Overtaken by event |
| ☐ See Minister's note | ☐ Withdrawn | |

Comment:

Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission advice on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Date:	23/02/2026
To:	Hon Matt Doocey, Minister for Mental Health		

Purpose

1. This briefing provides an update on our advice on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the advice we intend to publish, for your information.

Background

2. In May 2025, in line with our mandated role and following discussion with the Ministry of Health, we agreed to work with the Ministry during drafting of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and to provide you with formal written advice directly.
3. Formal advice was to be provided at two key points in the development of the Strategy: in response to the draft Strategy before it went to Cabinet for consultation in June 2025; and then after the public consultation originally planned for August 2025.
4. Following delays in preparing the draft Strategy, the Commission's Board decided to prepare proactive advice on the Strategy, and provide it to you and the Ministry on 27 May 2025. When we subsequently received the first draft Strategy, we provided advice building on the proactive advice on 6 June 2025.
5. We now have the opportunity to comment on the draft Strategy before it goes to Cabinet for approval to consult, and have prepared short advice on the latest draft.
6. As previously agreed, we expect to provide more detailed advice on the next iteration of the draft Strategy, after the public consultation has been completed. We also intend to publish our advice, in the interests of transparency and to support our advocacy functions.

Summary of our advice

7. A copy of each of our three pieces of advice (May 2025, June 2025, February 2026) are attached, for your information.

May 2025 Advice

8. Our proactive advice specified the need to see a Strategy that:
 - a. inspires hope and change with leadership at every level
 - b. outlines a future with concrete, measurable objectives

- c. provides a shared view of what a good mental health and addiction system looks like to drive progress
 - d. features cross-government and preventative actions to improve mental health and wellbeing
 - e. and takes a coordinated approach to bring together government strategies and plans that address mental health.
- 9. Key to our advice was our first system performance report, subsequently published in June 2025, and the six key system shifts needed to achieve improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people.

June 2025 Advice

- 10. This advice highlighted key points that arose when considering alignment of the draft Strategy with our proactive advice. This included a call for increased investment in Kaupapa Māori services, and effort to address the disproportionate need experienced by Māori. We also provided specific feedback on the Commission's role.

February 2026 Advice

- 11. This is the first time you have received our February 2026 advice. In summary:
 - a. We support the draft Strategy going to consultation and appreciate the improvements that have been made since our past advice. There is good alignment with the six system shifts needed to achieve better mental health and wellbeing outcomes described in our System Performance monitoring report. This will support our independent monitoring role.
 - b. There are still gaps including the need for: strengthening action on determinants to tackle increasing population rates of psychological distress; action to address needs of Māori; detail on resource and investment on several of the actions; and addressing the system information gaps on experience and outcomes data.
 - c. As before, we want to see a particular focus throughout the consultation on hearing and reflecting the views of people with lived experience of mental distress and substance use.

Publishing our advice

- 12. We intend to publish our advice, in the interests of transparency, and to support the public consultation process.
- 13. As some time has passed since we provided our May advice, and the draft Strategy has been improved since our June feedback, we will provide relevant context when we publish our past advice.
- 14. We will then share this advice, and the Ministry's consultation process with our networks.



Consultation

- 15. Initial feedback and engagement on the latest draft took place between the Commission and the Ministry team on 4 February 2026. This was followed by written advice (attached). We will have ongoing involvement with the Ministry, as the Strategy is finalised.

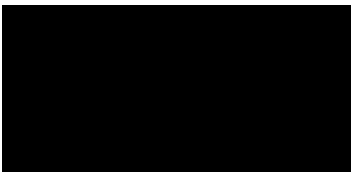
Next Steps

- 16. The Commission will:
 - a. Publish our three pieces of advice on our website, with relevant context included, so that it can inform public consultation. This will be prepared for the beginning of the consultation period in late March and released once public consultation is open.
 - b. Prepare communications content, to boost and share the public consultation process in March/ April.
 - c. Provide more detailed feedback to you and to the Ministry, after the Strategy has been updated following the consultation phase, as previously agreed.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

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| a) | note our latest (February 2026) advice on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. | Yes No |
| b) | note that we intend to publish this advice, and our previous advice from May and June 2025, on our website. | Yes No |
| c) | note that we will provide more advice on the next iteration of the draft Strategy, after the public consultation period. | Yes No |



Karen Orsborn
Chief Executive
Date: 23/02/2026

Hon Matt Doocey
Minister for Mental Health
Date:

Enclosed:

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| Attachment one | May 2025 proactive advice |
| Attachment two | June 2025 advice on draft Strategy |
| Attachment three | February 2026 advice on latest draft Strategy |

ENDS

