

Tuesday, 13 May 2025

Hon. Mark Mitchell
Minister of Police

Hon. Matt Doocoy
Minister for Mental Health

Tēnā kōrua, Ministers

Health, not haste petition

As you'll know, on 15 April this year the Police took the next step in scaling back their mental health response, without an alternative crisis service in place.

This continued removal occurred without a clear, publicly available health plan to ensure the tens of thousands of New Zealanders currently calling 111 or otherwise relying on police support can still access the mental health crisis help they need.

As Aotearoa New Zealand's most established mental health charity, these developments are of great concern to the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (the MHF).

On 4 April, the MHF launched the [Health, not haste petition](#) calling for the Police to stop its hasty withdrawal from mental health responses until an alternative, health-led response was funded and fully operating.

We received 16,059 signatures of support for this petition, from a range of concerned New Zealanders.

Together with our signees, we ask:

1. For you, Hon. Mark Mitchell, as the Minister of Police to stop the Police's hasty withdrawal from mental health responses until a fully-funded and operational alternative service is in place nationwide.
2. For you, Hon. Matt Doocey, as the Minister for Mental Health to show the public a fully developed and costed health plan to support the short- and long-term Police transition away from mental health responses, created in consultation with the people most affected and with adequate funding allocated in Budget 2025.
3. The Government to roll out and test their replacement crisis response service before the Police step away, to ensure New Zealanders will continue to receive the mental health support they need, and deserve, throughout this transition.

We agree with you both, and with many others in the mental health sector, that people experiencing mental distress deserve a health response, rather than a criminal justice response. We share your vision that people should get the right care, at the right time, from the right people. Police are not the right agency to respond to mental health callouts, and the MHF has long maintained police involvement should be the exception, not the rule.

We also understand that the change process has seen improved relationships between police and health agencies, and that some informal processes have been formalised. We recognise some great initiatives you have introduced, including crisis cafés and peer support specialists in emergency departments. We also hear your intention that each step of the withdrawal will take place only where safety concerns have been resolved.

But despite this, from where we stand, not enough has changed. There has been no budget announcement to support health and mental health services to respond to the increase in demand the continued police withdrawal will bring. Without a publicly released, concrete health plan, words of assurance alone cannot provide us with the confidence that people in distress will be supported in their greatest time of need.

Phases three and four of the Police's change programme present the most significant challenges and risks. We remain concerned tragedies will occur both now, and during these future phases. We will continue to pay close attention to these developments and to ask questions of decision-makers and government agencies as this transition progresses.

Like you, we want people and communities to be safe, and to be well and stay well. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you both at your earliest convenience to discuss the concerns voiced by 16,059 New Zealanders so far, and the wide range of acute crisis alternative solutions and system responses needed to make this seismic shift in crisis response effective and safe for all.

Mauri tū, mauri ora,

Shaun Robinson

Chief Executive