

19 February, 2026

Hon. Matt Doocey  
Minister for Mental Health

Tēnā koe Minister

### **Delivering the MHF's completed child and youth mental health petition**

Thank you for your reply to our 9 December letter asking for a response to our child and youth mental health petition. We appreciate the concern you expressed about the level of mental distress young people are experiencing. We are also heartened to hear that improving access to support for young people is a top priority for the Government, and that youth mental health is a focus area across the Government's mental health plan.

We acknowledge the initiatives you have introduced, including the annual funding boost to infant, child and adolescent specialist services in areas with lower investment. We are also very pleased to see the improvements in specialist wait times for young people in the Q1 2025/26 target results. We look forward to seeing this data publicly released, and recommend it becomes part of Health New Zealand's routinely reported quarterly target results.

Since we last wrote to you, even more New Zealanders have pledged their support to our petition's strong call for change. At the close of the petition yesterday, we have received another 5,481 signatures of support, from a range of concerned New Zealanders and constituents.

**With this letter, the MHF, with the support of 19,615 New Zealanders, formally deliver our petition to you and your Government, and ask for urgent and significant action on child and youth mental health.**

Even with recent progress on wait times, it remains a reality that young people experience the highest rates of mental health challenges in the country yet wait the longest for support. Sustained, long-term progress across prevention, wellbeing promotion and the full spectrum of supports remains vital. We remain concerned that there is no comprehensive plan to address poor youth mental health, and no sense of urgency for change.

This isn't about blame. We don't believe any successive government has successfully tackled child and youth mental health, but as the Minister for Mental Health, you have the unique ability to turn the dial on this issue.

We remain hopeful that additional funding for child and youth mental health will be made available in Budget 2026, and that the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and accompanying implementation plan will indeed drive improvements in youth mental health, as you suggest. Both Budget 2026 and the implementation plan provide opportune vehicles before the election to fund widely-supported improvements such as youth hubs or Youth One Stop Shops in every region; raise the age limit for child and adolescent mental health services to 24 years; and expand existing school-based mental health and wellbeing services.

Child and youth mental health deserves your full attention, and we will continue to press this issue because we, and 44% of New Zealanders<sup>1</sup>, believe it is the biggest problem facing our young people today. With your help, poor mental health will no longer be a barrier to young people flourishing in the future.

Thank you again for engaging with us on our petition. We will pass on your appreciation to everyone who has taken the time to share their personal story with you, as well as sharing your earlier response with supporters of the petition.

Mauri tū, mauri ora

**Shaun Robinson**  
Chief Executive

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos. Understanding Aotearoa New Zealand: Education, Youth Wellbeing and Digital Life. October 2025. [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2025-10/Ipsos%20Education\\_Monitor\\_2025%20-%20NZ%20Report.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2025-10/Ipsos%20Education_Monitor_2025%20-%20NZ%20Report.pdf).