

The Royal Australian and NZ College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) Sept 2025

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To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Dr Richard Sullivan, Executive National Director - Clinical		
Copy to:	Hon Matt Doocoy, Minister for Mental Health		
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Contact for further discussion			
Name	Position	Phone	1st contact
Dr Richard Sullivan	Executive National Director - Clinical	██████	
Dr Leeanne Fisher	National Chief Mental Health & Addiction	██████	x

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Appendix 1: Biographies of attendees

About the meeting

Purpose	You are meeting with The Royal Australian and NZ College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) to discuss the general vision for the health system and how psychiatry fits into this.
Date	Tuesday 23 September 2025
Time	10:10-10:30am
Venue	Auckland Policy Office
Attendees	Dr Hiran Thabrew, Chair of Tū Te Akaaka Roa (RANZCP's New Zealand National Office / Committee) Bronte Jefferies, Policy and Advocacy Officer
Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora officials	Leeanne Fisher, National Chief Mental Health and Addiction (<i>Attending virtually, please send a Teams link</i>)
Media	No media expected
Talking points	

Background and context

1. This meeting briefing provides you with information to support your attendance at a meeting with The Royal Australian and NZ College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) on Tuesday 23 September.
2. The purpose of the meeting is for you to get to know the New Zealand RANZCP representatives and to discuss the general vision for the health system and how psychiatry fits into this.
3. RANZCP is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists in New Zealand and Australia. It sets professional standards, promotes research and advocates

for mental health policy advancements.

4. RANZCP delivers accreditation of psychiatry training programmes and continuous professional development. It is actively working to increase the Māori workforce by teaching culturally appropriate care and furthering their commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
5. Health NZ is working alongside RANZCP on several fronts to develop a data-informed approach to strengthen and grow the psychiatry workforce. The aim is to mitigate against the aging psychiatry workforce, to rebalance the current reliance on overseas-trained medical graduates, and to ensure specialty areas of psychiatry are well staffed.

Key challenges in psychiatry

6. Psychiatry Workforce Training and Retention

The national coordination of psychiatry training is currently being piloted, but the availability of Senior Medical Officers (SMOs) to supervise trainees is limited due to high vacancy rates and enforced cross-covering in public mental health services. This impacts the training capacity, as trainees are not fully funded for all required educational experiences. Additionally, international competition, particularly with Australia, poses risks when reviewing locum terms and rates.

7. Service Pressures

There is growing pressure on Mental Health services, including psychiatry. The rise in demand and acuity has strained existing resources, further exacerbated by ongoing changes to the mental health system. Additionally, the limited progress in digital reform and the absence of a digital strategy have hindered efficiency and modernisation efforts.

8. The Mental Health Bill

RANZCP has expressed concerns that their views and issues have not been adequately considered in the Ministry's development of the Mental Health Bill, which is currently awaiting its second reading. These concerns likely surround patient safety and practitioner accountability, including the lack of minimum qualification standards, insufficient assessment timeframes, exclusion of certain patients, prohibition of seclusion for patients under 18, and the introduction of a new infringement framework.

9. Growing and Ageing population

As our population continues to grow and age, we are likely to witness a significant increase in serious mental illnesses and age-related conditions, such as dementia. Without substantial investment in mental health services and age-related healthcare, the burden on our healthcare system will become overwhelming. This could lead to longer wait times, reduced quality of care, and increased strain on families and caregivers. Proactive investment is essential to ensure that we can provide adequate support and treatment for those affected, ultimately improving their quality of life and reducing the overall societal impact.

Key opportunity in psychiatry

10. Growing the psychiatry workforce

The greatest opportunity in psychiatry is workforce development. The health system needs to use data-driven strategies to retain, strengthen and grow the psychiatry workforce to ensure adequate staffing of psychiatric specialities and reduce dependence on overseas medical graduates. This involves mitigating the impacts of an aging workforce as more psychiatrists approach retirement, offering flexible working

arrangements, implementing retention packages, coordinating training nationally, expanding advanced training opportunities in child and adolescent psychiatry, and increasing the number of placements and house officer positions.

Recent, current, or planned key initiatives relevant to the meeting

11. The key psychiatry initiatives in the Mental Health and Addiction Workforce Plan 2024-2027 are:
 - a) Develop a national map and adopt national planning of psychiatry training volumes so we can align future increases in training numbers, including subspecialty training in vulnerable areas such as Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.
 - b) Grow to 50 the Stage 1 psychiatry training roles in Health NZ services from 2025 onwards.
 - c) Establish new House Officer runs in psychiatry.
12. In partnership with RANZCP, a national working group has been established to progress workforce related issues, including developing a national psychiatry training plan. This plan is to support the development of a more coordinated approach to planning for psychiatry training, rather than the locally-driven approach used currently. This work sits with the Mentally Well commissioning team.
13. Health NZ is continuing the contract with RANZCP to deliver the psychiatry interest forum (PIF) to grow interest from medical students and junior doctors to consider a career path in psychiatry. The PIF has been in place since 2022 and has a work programme that supports and promotes events and activities to nurture students' interest in psychiatry, alongside allocating bursaries and scholarships to attend psychiatry conferences each year. The PIF also seeks to increase engagement of Māori, Pacific and rural-placed students.
14. There are both Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Consultation Liaison Psychiatrists face-to-face engagements scheduled for Friday 31 October at Middlemore Hospital in Auckland. The Health NZ National Chief Mental Health and Addiction will facilitate a session alongside the National Chief Medical Officer to bring these two professional groups together. This session aims to enable discussion, understanding and relationships between Chief Medical Officers and Consultation Liaison Psychiatrists, helping work towards improved interdisciplinary collaboration.

Appendix 1: Biographies of attendees

Name, Role	Biography
<p>Dr Hiran Thabrew Chair, RANZCP New Zealand National Committee</p>	<p>Dr Hiran Thabrew is the Chair of the RANZCP New Zealand National Committee. He is a dual-trained child and adolescent psychiatrist and paediatrician, currently working with the Consult Liaison Team at Starship Children's Hospital in Auckland. He serves as the director of Te Ara Hāro, the centre for infant, child, and adolescent mental health at the University of Auckland. Additionally, he leads the New Zealand Child and Adolescent Research Network (CARN) and ICAMH, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting child well-being.</p> <p>He gained his RANZCP fellowship in 2007, has been a member of the New Zealand National Office (Tū Te Akaaka Roa) since 2018, and began his term as Chair in 2023.</p> <p>Dr Thabrew is also involved in academia and research, working as editor for the journals <i>Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH)</i> and <i>Frontiers in Digital Mental Health</i>. His professional interests include child and youth well-being and mental health, digital mental health, and workforce and service development.</p>
<p>Brontë Jefferies Policy and Advocacy Officer, RANZCP New Zealand National Office</p>	<p>Brontë Jefferies is the Policy and Advocacy Officer for the RANZCP New Zealand National Office. Brontë holds a BA (Hons) in Cultural Anthropology from Victoria University of Wellington and a Master's of Applied Social Work from Massey University. Her professional journey includes roles as a researcher at Mahitahi Trust, user experience designer at Ember Korowai Takitini, and mental health and addiction programme board member at Auckland DHB.</p> <p>Brontë has founded Te Poho Collective, a digital wellbeing platform, Mind Space, a peer support group for students, and Whānau Wisdoms consultancy. Her professional interest focuses on transforming mental health through lived experience leadership and elevating community voices into health system change.</p>