

Meeting with PSA 4 November 2025

Due to MO:	31 October 2025	Reference	HNZ00088423
To:	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
From:	Robyn Shearer, Executive National Director, People & Culture, Health & Safety		
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Proactive Release:	This title is proposed by Health NZ for proactive release		

Contact for further discussion

Name	Position	Phone	1st contact
Robyn Shearer	Executive National Director, People & Culture, Health & Safety		x

Attachments

Appendix 1: Attendee biographies

Appendix 2:

About the meeting

Purpose	You are meeting with the Public Service Association (PSA) as part of your regular series of meetings with them.
Date	Tuesday 4 November 2025
Time	4.30-4.50pm
Venue	6.6, Executive Wing
Attendees	Fleur Fitzsimons, National Secretary, Public Service Association Sue McCullough, National Sector Lead, Public Service Association Ashok Shankar, National Sector Lead, Public Service Association Andrew Skelly, National Sector Lead, Public Service Association Note, biographies are attached as Appendix 1
Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora officials	Robyn Shearer, Executive National Director, People & Culture, Health & Safety Andrew Wilson, Lead Negotiator, Industrial Relations
Media	No media expected
Talking points	[REDACTED]

Background and context

1. The PSA is a trade union that represents around 80,000 workers across local government, the public service, the state sector, community public services, and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ).
2. The PSA has a prominent voice and runs campaigns, including ones focused on health reforms, pay equity and equal pay. The union frequently prepares submissions on behalf of members for issues that require public consultation. They are also active in collective negotiations, employment relation issues and other union activities, and are affiliated with several national and international organisations, most notably the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand.
3. In relation to Health NZ, the PSA represents a subset of nurses, health staff previously employed by the former DHBs, and the majority of mental health nurses. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
4. In contrast, PSA has a strong presence across central government agencies as the main union for administration, advisory, policy and management roles within the public sector. For Health NZ, PSA membership for this area is estimated to be around 15,000.

6. The PSA undertook a campaign to cover more of Health NZ's corporate functions, leading to the creation of the Policy, Advisory, Knowledge and Specialist Collective (PAKS) Agreement. This is in addition to the National Health Administration Collective Agreement already in place.

Matters for discussion

6. The PSA has indicated four areas of interest for this meeting:
 - a) Safe staffing;
 - b) Health and safety and violence;
 - c) Morale; and
 - d) Bargaining.

Safe staffing

7. Health NZ is mindful of the challenges around recruiting suitably qualified nursing staff in the mental health operating environment. This is a problem faced by many similar jurisdictions.
8. Health NZ is committed to safe staffing and is required to meet our collective agreement and legislative obligations relating to this. We are also committed to maintaining our ability to manage the organisation and balance staffing need with financial sustainability. ■

[Redacted text block]

9. [Redacted text block]

10. Health NZ is also currently piloting a Variance Indicator Score across four community mental health teams. This tool is completed daily (or as required) to enable early identification and response to staffing concerns.

Health and safety and violence

11. Health NZ understands that mental and public health operating environments have inherent health and safety challenges. The transition to a reduced police presence is understandably raising questions.

12. Health NZ is mindful that safe staffing is a key health and safety consideration.

13. [Redacted text block]

Active engagement with PSA on health and safety matters

14. Health NZ works closely with the PSA on a wider range of health and safety matters.
15. There are extensive opportunities for the PSA to influence and input into health and safety activity across Health NZ. The PSA is a signatory to the Worker Participation agreement, which is a joint agreement between Health NZ and all national unions to help implement Health NZ worker engagement commitments and ensure local and national compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act.
16. The PSA is an active member of the national Tripartite Working Group. This group includes all national unions and Health NZ (with WorkSafe as required). The Working Group meets monthly with a focus on addressing critical health and safety risks.
17. All unions are provided with the opportunity to input into the design and implementation of responses to health and safety risks such as violence and aggression and psychosocial harm. This forum also enables specific issues or programmes of work to be monitored and reported on.
18. Where appropriate, there is also specific engagement with the PSA on issues or programmes of work that have a health and safety element, for example the PSA is a member of working group of unions providing input into implementation of the NZ Police operational changes in support of mental health.

Violence and Aggression

19. In relation to violence and aggression PSA have been active in expressing concerns about:
 - the right to withdraw labour in unsafe situations,
 - the need for staff to be encouraged to report violence and aggression incidents,
 - appropriate escalation pathways,
 - feedback loops so staff know how incidents have been addressed,
 - the need for effective post-incident support for staff,
 - appropriate training to recognise violence and aggression risk and de-escalate,
 - adequate resourcing to keep staff safe,
 - the need to back clinical judgement when NZ Police assistance has been sought.

These concerns are being actively worked with and addressed.

20. Health NZ takes its responsibility for staff, patient and visitor safety seriously. There are unique challenges to providing safe environments at our hospitals. Our hospitals are public spaces, open all hours of the day and night. When people and their whānau present to receive our services, they can be at their most distressed.
21. We recognise the significant impact of violence and aggression on our staff, and we support staff to assess risk and not put themselves in, or to remove themselves from, unsafe settings.
22. We encourage staff to report all incidents of violence and aggression and are working to ensure that there is appropriate and timing follow up on all incidents. We ask all unions to encourage their members to report. We have supplied information to the PSA on how incidents are handled and escalated to give assurance they have been adequately

addressed.

23. The PSA is aware of and has been providing comment and support on a range of national and local initiatives to manage this health and safety risk. These initiatives include:

- using risk assessment tools to support our staff who are working in high-risk settings (e.g. lone workers),
- reviewing the design of facilities and how we make them safer for the staff and people within in them – this might be activity such as modification to waiting areas or placement of duress alarms,
- standing up district level violence and aggression working groups to better understand what is happening on the ground and look at the practical ways we can keep our staff safe,
- providing online and face-to-face training for violence identification and de-escalation,
- communicating our position on violence and aggression to visitors to our facilities,
- maintaining strong working relationships with NZ Police at local and national level.

Morale

24. 

Bargaining



Appendix 1: Biographies of attendees

Fleur Fitzsimons, National Secretary

- Fleur Fitzsimons has worked for the PSA for 20 years, starting as an organiser, then Media Advisor, Legal Officer/Solicitor, and then as National Secretary.
- Fleur was a member of Wellington City Council from 2017 to 2022 and ran in the 2023 General Election, standing as the Labour candidate for Rongotai.
- She became National Secretary of the PSA in February 2025.

Ashok Shankar, National Sector Lead – Health

- Ashok Shankar is a PSA organiser and the PSA's lead for the health sector.

Sue McCullough

- Sue McCullough is a PSA organiser and a national sector lead for health.

Andrew Skelly

- Andrew Skelly is a PSA organiser and a national sector lead for health.