



**PSA CPS Sector Committee Submission to
the Pae Ora Legislation Committee**

Pae Ora Healthy Futures Bill

December 2021

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission as the representatives of PSA members in the Community Public Services Sector on the Health Reforms and the Pae Ora Bill.

We believe that the health reforms are necessary and overdue. We believe that we need to get it right this time and want to highlight the importance of some crucial aspects for our members.

Who are we?

We are employees of the Community Public Services Sector. We represent over 9,700 members in over 350 not-for profit and for-profit organisations that receive public funding to deliver health services. The Community Public Services (CPS) sector covers people working in the community in the areas of:

- disability
- mental health and addictions
- home support, and
- social services.

We are community home support workers, community residential care workers, team leaders, community social workers, whānau workers, community youth workers, whānau ora navigators, activities coordinators, community mental health workers etc.

Our employers tender for government funding to provide needed services in the community. The pandemic of COVID-19 has highlighted the extent to which we are essential workers. We look after the most vulnerable people in our communities, providing essential daily care to people in their own homes and supporting people to live independent lives.

Our workforce is mostly made up of women, a large proportion of whom are Māori, Pasifika, and ethnic minorities. Of our members, 82% are women, who struggle with job insecurity (about 12% are casual workers) and low pay. Although our work is acknowledged to be essential, we often still feel undervalued as there is an expectation by our employers that we will work flexibly to meet our clients' needs - even though we also have family obligations of our own.

Many of us work shifts or have variable hours of work. We have had to fight for every element of reasonable pay, such as payment for sleepovers and travel time. Many support workers still do not have guaranteed regular breaks during their working day or consistent weekly hours of work.

Why are we making a distinct submission on the health reform?

- Community Public services are an integral part of the communities we serve.
- Currently there are no safe staffing levels for carers in older person's care, mental health or disability support services. These are essential for the safety of both workers and people receiving services. We would like to see guidelines around staffing ratios for all residential services that are currently provided via contracts with DHBs or government Ministries. Contracts must allow service providers to adhere to these guidelines – with an emphasis on the importance of protecting local service provision.
- We see these changes as a major opportunity to improve staffing levels and support workers in their professional development by ensuring the environment they work in is safe and they are well supported in their roles. Safe staffing levels will allow workers to take their legal entitled regular breaks during their working day, to attend appropriate training sessions along with health and safety meetings, and to be able to have a safe personal/work life balance within our community.
- We strongly believe that community workers need to be recognised as skilled professionals and given the respect they deserve. Valuing us means ensuring we have decent and secure work including guaranteed hours and equal pay.

How do we transform the health system for the better?

- By valuing all our workers in the Community Public Services Sector and recognising the work they do as essential in the fabrication of our nation's overall health and wellbeing.
- By providing adequate funding to service providers that improve and encourage the safety and wellbeing of employees by means of mandatory safe staffing ratios, appropriate essential training, better technology resourcing supplied by the employer, and better resourcing for in-between travel. No employee should be out of pocket because they are having to subsidise the shortfall for a job they are employed to do.
- Ensuring service providers are accountable for the way in which their services are provided and delivered. We would like to see an auditing system that provides a genuine assessment of service provision, as well as ensuring required policies and procedures are in place. There needs to be ongoing support and assessment for any service that needs to improve in order to develop better systems. This aligns with the principles of The New Zealand Health Charter.
- We have an aging population, as well as more demand for care services in disability and mental health. We need to attract and retain more care workers – we can only do this by ensuring better work conditions for all our workers in the Community Public Services Sector.
- Worker involvement in health and safety is an essential part of effective service provision. We would like to see stronger contractual safeguards to ensure that community support

workers have the opportunity to fully participate in health and safety meetings and are paid for their attendance.

Thank you for considering our submission.

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