Statement by Dr Hiran Thabrew, Chair of the RANZCP Tu Te Akaaka Roa, New Zealand National Committee, 11 October 2023

“About 1 in 5 New Zealanders will experience mental illness each year, and moderate to severe mental illness has risen by nearly 40 percent in the last decade, indicating that demand for mental health support is rising, particularly for our most vulnerable.

“Whilst we welcome the health commitments announced by the National Party and Labour to boost the number of psychiatrists in the system to deliver the critical mental healthcare New Zealanders need, much more needs to be done to improve the current state of the crumbling mental health system in the country.

“At the moment, we’re confronting chronic workforce shortages with an unsustainable dependency on overseas-trained clinicians, under-resourcing of public hospitals and mental health units, and the most vulnerable lacking access to timely and effective treatment.

“Moreover, Māori people have lower income and life expectancy, poorer education and health outcomes, and stigmatisation within healthcare, and higher rates of mental health distress and addictions, due to ongoing impacts of colonisation and harmful political, social and economic policies.

“Similarly, due to discrimination, racism and historical events, Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa continue to face additional challenges that impact negatively on their health outcomes.

“An increase in funding is necessary if we are to have a sustainable, home-grown workforce and all the advantages that provides including an understanding of culturally appropriate services for Māori and Pacific Peoples, including supporting them to provide mental healthcare developed and delivered by them.

“It is heartening to see mental health and broader health issues rise to prominence in this election cycle. And rightly so, because they affect each and every one of us and we all seek to benefit through better health policies. However, the vision of Pae Ora (Health Futures) can only be met by building the capacity and capability of the mental health, addiction, and disability workforce to do the mahi.

“The incoming New Zealand Government has an opportunity to set an example for Australia, a country similar in many respects and battling similar workforce challenges in their mental health infrastructure, by investing in psychiatrists and mental health workforce to deliver the reform needed to cater to the increasing mental health challenges amongst our populations.”

END

RANZCP NZ full election platform [here](#).