**Mental Health Inquiry Questions and Answers**

11 February 2018

**Is the Inquiry independent?**

Yes, under the Inquiries Act 2013, all inquiries must act independently, impartially and fairly. The Chair and members determine how to conduct an inquiry within the Terms of Reference set by the Government.

**Who is supporting the Inquiry?**

The Inquiry is supported by a secretariat, headed by an experienced public servant appointed by the Department of Internal Affairs, as the administering Department.

While the Minister of Health was responsible for appointing the Inquiry and receiving their report, to maintain independence, the Minister of Internal Affairs is the Minister responsible for the administration of the Inquiry.

**What role will the Ministry of Health have in the Inquiry?**

The Inquiry is independent from the Ministry of Health, however it may request the Ministry of Health to supply information.

**What is the scope of the Inquiry?**

The Inquiry will consider:

1. mental health problems across the full spectrum from mental distress to enduring psychiatric illness, including barriers to accessing services and support
2. mental health and addiction needs from the perspectives of:
   1. identifying and responding to people with mental health and addiction problems
   2. preventing mental health problems and promoting mental well-being
3. preventing suicide
4. activities directly related to mental health and addiction undertaken within the broader health and disability sector (in community, primary and secondary care), as well as the education, justice and social sectors and through the accident compensation and wider workplace relations and safety systems
5. opportunities to build on the efforts of whānau, communities, employers, people working in mental health and others to promote mental health.

**Will the Inquiry consider suicide?**

Yes, suicide is within the scope of the Inquiry. However, individual cases are outside the scope of the Inquiry and will not be investigated.

**How will people be able to input to the Inquiry?**

All views will be sought, including from whānau, service users, the mental health workforce and other interested stakeholders. The Inquiry will call for public contributions and the Inquiry panel will determine how people can contribute. Details will be supplied once the Inquiry is up and running.

**How will the Inquiry recommendations be used?**

The recommendations of the Inquiry will help inform the Government’s decisions on future arrangements for the mental health and addiction system, including:

1. roles and responsibilities of agencies in the health sector, including a re-established Mental Health Commission
2. improved coordination between the health system and other systems such as education, welfare, housing, justice, disability support, accident compensation and emergency response
3. the design and delivery of services (eg, kaupapa Māori approaches to mental health) and effective engagement with all relevant stakeholders including mental health service providers, and consumers and their communities and whānau
4. governance, leadership and accountability levers to ensure access to an appropriate standard of mental health services across the country
5. fiscal approaches, models and funding arrangements
6. data collection, programme evaluation and information flows
7. the suite of relevant regulatory frameworks, including the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992 and the Substance Abuse (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 2017
8. workforce planning, training, support and management.

**What timeframe is the Inquiry working to?**

The Inquiry started from 31 January 2018 when the New Zealand Gazette notice making the appointment was signed by the appointing Minister. It must report to the Minister of Health by 31 October 2018.

**How were the members of the Inquiry chosen?**

Candidates were chosen to ensure the required skills were available. The required skills were:

* in depth understanding of wider mental health and addiction services, including Māori mental health services and providers in the health and social sector
* lived experience of mental health issues
* clinical expertise
* Māori cultural expertise
* Pacific cultural expertise.

**How much will the Inquiry cost?**

The estimated cost of the Inquiry is $6,560,000.

**Why isn't a Royal Commission of Inquiry being undertaken?**

Several kinds of inquiry, including those under the Inquiries Act 2013 and non-statutory ministerial inquiries were considered. A government inquiry, established under the Inquiries Act 2013 was determined to be the most appropriate form of inquiry, because an inquiry established under the Act is independent, impartial and fair. It has statutory powers to require the production of evidence, to compel witnesses and, most importantly, provides protection to witnesses, giving them the same immunities and protections they would have before the courts. Inquiry members are also protected.

Stakeholder views on this matter indicated a strong preference for the gravitas and protections offered by an independent statutory inquiry, rather than a non-statutory ministerial inquiry.

A government inquiry also allows for more immediate issues to be addressed and to provide quicker, independent advice from the inquiry panel.

**How were the Terms of Reference developed? Were any stakeholders consulted?**

The Terms of Reference were developed in collaboration with the Inquiry Chair. Selected stakeholders were consulted.

**How will the views of the mental health workforce be captured by the Inquiry?**

All views will be sought, including from the mental health workforce. As the Inquiry is independent and established under the Inquiries Act 2013, people can provide information confidentially, without compromising their job or position, or risking facing disciplinary measures as a result.

**How much focus will be given to addictions versus mental health?**

The Inquiry will determine how much focus will be given to addiction in comparison to mental health. This will be informed by public feedback under the Inquiry.

**When will the Mental Health Commission be re-established? What will its role be?**

This will be influenced by the Inquiry and determined after the Inquiry reports.