
Whakatupu Mana

Critical Actions to Strengthen the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Whānau Māori

Confronting racism and prejudice in our system, and what we must now advance as a sector

Riki Nia Nia

Te Rau Ora

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Acknowledging Te Kete Pounamu Journey

Te Kete Pounamu's mahi to champion the voice of our whānau has shaped this kōrero



Key message Te Kete Pounamu champions the voices of whānau with lived experience. Their mahi is foundational in the mahi of Te Rau Ora.

Two strategies now give us a platform

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–2036

A strong and timely national direction. It recognises the need for:

- Stronger prevention and early intervention
- Better access and a “no wrong door” approach
- Workforce development
- **Lived experience leadership**
- Equity and accountability
- More integrated and responsive services

Māori Health Strategy 2026 — Whiria Te Ora

Released 21 August 2026, replacing Pae Tū. It names four priorities:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Quality, safety and accountability
- A resilient health workforce and provider sector
- Strengthening Māori health leadership

Key message Two strategies, the same priorities. Our task is to turn them into action, accountability and visible change for whānau.

From listening to action

Today I want to do three things

01

Honour what has been shared by our lived experience whānau

02

Highlight the critical actions that now need to be advanced across the sector

03

Offer a practical framework to guide future action, investment and accountability

Key message The strategy provides a platform - but our whānau tell us where implementation must be stronger.

This is what whānau told Te Kete Pounamu

From our Te Kete Pounamu engagement with whānau with lived experience:

- Support must come earlier, before crisis
- Whānau are carrying too much without enough practical support
- Culture, whakapapa, wairua and belonging are foundations of wellbeing
- Racism, stigma and discrimination continue to shape experiences of care
- Lived experience is not just feedback — it is expertise
- Māori need authority in decisions, data, commissioning and accountability
- Workforce development must be prioritised, deliberate, resourced and measurable

“What I heard was not a request for more words. It was a call for visible, practical and sustained change.”

Where whānau and the strategy diverge

What whānau told Te Kete Pounamu

- Racism inside care, not only attitudes toward it
- Prevention means housing, income, education, employment and transport
- Access is distance, cost and travel time - not only waiting
- Kaupapa Māori as central, not complementary
- Lived experience as expertise - and no more re-telling our story to deaf ears
- Our kōrero is a taonga; Māori must govern the way forward

Where the strategy stops short

- Commits to combat prejudice and discrimination; institutional racism unnamed
- A 25% prevention target defined clinically - determinants sit outside it
- Targets measure wait times; nothing measures geographic reach
- Kaupapa Māori referenced; Māori measures deferred to implementation planning
- Lived experience network funded; no Māori targets, no duty to act on feedback
- PRIMHD data improved by June 2027; no Māori data sovereignty

Racism is the common thread

What whānau described to us

- Being judged, dismissed or treated differently because they are Māori
- Stigma and whakamā that delay help until crisis
- Identity and wairua treated as an add-on, not as care
- Having to prove distress before being believed
- Kaimahi Māori carrying cultural load without recognition

What confronting it requires

- Name institutional racism, not only individual prejudice
- Measure it — access, seclusion and complaints data by ethnicity
- Kaupapa Māori services as a first choice, not an alternative
- Cultural safety accountability at governance and commissioning level
- Māori governance over the data that shows whether it is shifting

Six gaps to close - starting with racism

Every request below strengthens a commitment the strategy has already made

1

Name institutional racism, not only prejudice and discrimination

2

Ring-fence a Māori share of the 25% prevention and early intervention target

3

Widen the definition of prevention to the determinants whānau named

4

Set a Māori share of the 500 practitioners trained each year, by role and region

5

Publish a Māori outcomes schedule against the \$2.982b ringfence

6

Apply Māori data sovereignty to the PRIMHD outcomes data due June 2027

Six more - access, workforce and authority

Each of these makes existing implementation activity work for whānau Māori

7

Define “no wrong door” from a whānau, rural and travel-cost perspective

8

Set Māori targets within the 120 peer support training places each year

9

Extend the workforce investment review into a 10-year Māori workforce plan

10

Build kaupapa Māori standards into the supervision and career pathway work

11

Make the shift to partnership commissioning a protected Māori pathway

12

Resource whānau as active partners in prevention, not unpaid carers

Key message These are not twelve new asks. They are twelve places where an existing commitment needs a deliberate & intentional Māori focus to reach whānau.

From commitment to delivery

In practice, this means:

- Māori workforce baselines and targets by role, region and service level
- Scholarships, paid placements and school-to-career pathways
- Māori lived-experience and whānau roles valued as workforce capability
- Cultural and clinical supervision pathways
- Long-term (evergreen) contracting for Māori providers, evergreen contracting
- Centres of excellence across kaupapa Māori mental health providers
- Annual public reporting on investment, workforce growth and whānau outcomes

“If we are serious about workforce transformation, we must move from describing the gap to investing in the solution.”

The Whakatupu Mana Action Framework

Six pou, building on Te Ahi Kōmau developed by Te Kete Pounamu

1	2	3	4	5	6
Mana Motuhake	Mana Whānau	Mana Tangata	Mana Mahi	Mana Taurite	Mana Raraunga
Māori authority, decision rights and rangatiratanga	Whānau capability, voice, leadership and wellbeing	Lived experience as expertise and leadership	Deliberate Māori workforce growth and sustainability	Equity, anti-racism, cultural safety and fair investment	Māori data sovereignty and Māori-defined evidence

Key message Each pou is a test of whether our actions are strong enough, Māori-led enough, and accountable enough.

Six questions every action should answer

Before we call something a solution, we should ask:

? Who holds authority?

? How are whānau strengthened?

? How is lived experience leading?

? What Māori workforce capability is being grown?

? How is racism being named, measured and removed?

? Who governs the data and evidence?

Key message If an action cannot answer these questions, it is probably not strong enough.

Recommended next steps

To strengthen the strategy from a Māori and lived experience perspective:

1

Seek Māori sub-targets under each of the five national mental health and addiction targets

2

Secure Māori and lived experience input to the three plans due by 30 June 2027

3

Establish Māori data governance over PRIMHD outcomes and experience data

4

Report annually on Māori outcomes, investment and progress on racism

5

Adopt Te Ahi Kōmau as the lens for auditing implementation, led by Te Kete Pounamu

6

Agree whānau-defined measures of success with Te Kete Pounamu within 12 months

The next decade must be defined by action

The next decade cannot be defined only by whether Māori were heard. It must be defined by whether we made a positive difference:

- Māori governance
- Whānau wellbeing
- Free of racism
- Lived experience leadership
- A strong Māori workforce
- Kaupapa Māori capability
- Fair investment and accountable outcomes



Amohia ake te ora o te iwi. Ka puta ki te wheiao. Kīngi Tūheitia.

The health and wellbeing of our people should always be paramount.

“Whakatupu Mana means growing the conditions for whānau to flourish — for Iwi, for hapu, for our workforce, and for the generations to come.”