



**BUDGET
2025**

THE GROWTH BUDGET Frontline Services

Hon Matt Doocey
Minister for Mental Health
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Mental distress 111 calls to get a mental health response

The Government is overhauling the way emergency services respond to 111 calls from people experiencing mental distress, Minister for Mental Health Matt Doocey says.

Budget 2025 invests \$28 million over four years to fund the transition from a Police-led response to a mental health response to 111 mental distress calls.

The Budget also invests \$50 million in improving the safety, privacy and dignity of mentally distressed people at mental health facilities.

“New Zealand’s current response to mental distress crisis calls is not fit-for-purpose. Transitioning from a Police-led response to a mental health response is the right thing to do,” Mr Doocey says.

The multi-agency response will involve 10 new co-response teams and a significant boost to the capacity of mental health telehealth services.

“Advocates, families, Police and mental health and addiction workers have repeatedly told me that having a uniformed Police officer turn up at times of mental health need can be disheartening and distressing.

“Police do a great job in our communities, but they are not mental health professionals. Police will always attend when there is a threat to life or safety, but this initiative will free Police up to do with core Policing.

“We know that co-response teams work. An evaluated trial saw fewer people being taken straight to a police station or emergency department. Instead, some had their issues instantly addressed, saying this was far less stressful and frightening than being transferred directly to hospital.

“The package includes increased funding for psychology internships, stage one psychiatry registrars and peer training. Money is also set aside for security for up to 12 smaller emergency departments that require security and support.”

Mr Doocey said the investment in lifting standards at care facilities was part of the Government's response to safety recommendations by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

"Keeping vulnerable people safe in the care of mental health services is an absolute bottom line for this Government," he says. "We must ensure mental health facilities are safe and fit-for-purpose."

"This investment will cover in-depth assessment, safety improvements and upgrades. It is expected to reduce the number of incidents and deaths in state care, and to improve working conditions for mental health staff who do an excellent job in often challenging situations."

"As New Zealand's first Minister for Mental Health, I've heard too many stories from families whose loved ones died while in the care of mental health services. It's heartbreaking, and we have to do better."

The Budget will also bolster safeguards and oversight of compulsory mental health and addiction care.

"More than \$9 million will go towards stronger protections for people receiving compulsory assessment and treatment and to improve complaints and investigation processes for people under compulsory care."

"These measures will improve the experience of state care for people with high and complex mental health, addiction and intellectual disability needs," Mr Doocey says.