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Govt's mental health announcement "perplexing"

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) has described the government's latest mental health announcement as "absolutely perplexing" and "a total waste of taxpayer money".

Health Minister David Clark has just announced \$40 million will be spent on a new mental health initiative.

Workers who will provide the service will start their training next month and the government expects services to be fully in place by the middle of next year.

NZAC president Christine Macfarlane says there are thousands of qualified and experienced counsellors already in the workforce who could provide these additional services right now.

"The government's announcement is absolutely perplexing and a case of reinventing a perfectly good wheel.

"Why waste all that taxpayer money giving scratch training to a whole new workforce when there's a much better qualified, hugely experienced and already well-trained workforce just waiting to be put to good use right now by this government?"

Macfarlane said Kiwis who are stressed need immediate access to the proper support. She said they can't be asked to wait 12 months for services to be available and then only to see someone with basic training and little to no experience.

"How's that going to help those in need?"

There are nearly 3,000 currently practising counsellors throughout New Zealand who are registered with NZAC.

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