

Profit Before Recovery

Press Release Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers

The President of ANZASW, James Makowharemahihi is concerned that the Government's strategy to use Social Investment Bonds to deliver services to assist people with mental illness return to work is putting profit before supporting recovery for people with mental illness.

Of equal concern is how the successful outcome is to be determined. If service users and service providers are not involved in the determining what a successful outcome looks like will it be a matter of people into jobs regardless of whether it is the right person in the right job at the right time.

Minister Colman suggests it will be banks and financial institutions that purchase the Social Investment Bonds. These are institutions that will expect a return on their investment and the Government's bonus payment. In the same interview the Minister acknowledged that placing people with mental illness into work was complex work. It is hard to see how profit can be generated concurrent with delivery of humane and supportive services to the most vulnerable in the target client group.

ANZASW does not dispute the value of meaningful work, especially when it is paired with appropriate support and training for both the employee and the employer. Failure to adequately prepare potential employees and address employer discrimination alongside providing support and advice to employers will surely lead to outcomes not being met. Additionally there is potential for the mental health of those involved to deteriorate when employment does not live up to expectation.

The not inconsiderable amount of funding being made available to this programme would be better directed to adequately supporting the mental health agencies to develop evaluation models, addressing stigma, incentivising employers, and above all consulting with sector stakeholders about ways to improve services. Social experiments are not the solution.

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