

22 May 2018

Media release

New Zealanders demand changes to mental health

Key community and health advocates are calling on the public to sign a petition supporting a mindful response to New Zealand's appalling mental health situation.

Public health physician, Brigid O'Brien says "Today half of New Zealand is experiencing poor mental wellbeing that impacts on their lives. Our adolescent suicide rate is the highest among developed nations. These shocking statistics say very clearly that we are not tackling this issue in the best way we can."

A petition has been released calling on the Government to make mindfulness a central strategy of the Government's approach to mental wellbeing.

Brigid O'Brien says New Zealand needs a different approach. "Studies show that mindfulness needs to be at the centre of what we are doing. It decreases anxiety and depression, increases mental wellbeing, improves concentration, improves emotion regulation and empathy skills and helps develop positive relationships."

The group believes mindfulness is a crucial part of the changes needed to benefit the mental wellbeing of all New Zealanders. It can be implemented across many sectors of society. Worldwide there are effective mindfulness-based interventions in prevention, promotion and treatment across many sectors including in education, healthcare, mental health, early childhood and parenting, and criminal justice.

Director of Mindful Education Group, Tash Rix, says "Our mindfulness in schools programme, *Pause, Breathe, Smile*, shows that when taught in schools, mindfulness boosts cognitive performance and builds resilience."

The petition is online with Action Station and people are encouraged to sign it so that it can be taken to the Government Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry.

The group will deliver the petition to Government on 5 June.

For further inquiries contact ?? on ??