

Public Position Statement

Asian Family Services response to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

To Ministry of Health,

Asian Family Services supports the direction of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and welcomes its focus on prevention, early intervention, access, workforce development, lived experience, quality, and system-wide partnerships. These priorities are essential to building a more equitable mental health and wellbeing system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

However, the success of the Strategy will depend on whether equity is translated into implementation. For Asian communities, equity must be reflected in how services are designed, commissioned, funded, delivered, measured, and held accountable.

As a national provider working alongside Asian communities, AFS continues to see significant unmet need. Asian communities are highly diverse across language, culture, ethnicity, migration journey, faith, age, family structure, and lived experience. A one-size-fits-all approach will continue to limit access, trust, engagement, and outcomes.

AFS's service experience and research show that many Asian individuals, families, and whānau face persistent barriers to mental health and addiction support, including stigma, language barriers, system complexity, limited-service knowledge, lack of trust in mainstream systems, and concerns about confidentiality, shame, community reputation, and immigration status. Too often, people seek support only when distress has escalated.

Mental health and wellbeing for Asian communities must be understood within wider family, social, cultural, and migration contexts, including settlement stress, intergenerational pressure, racism and exclusion, education and employment challenges, social isolation, family violence, gambling harm, alcohol harm, and financial stress.

AFS knows what works. Culturally responsive, community-led, and linguistically appropriate services improve trust, engagement, and outcomes. Trusted Asian providers, peer support, lived experience leadership, family-inclusive practice, and wrap-around models must be embedded as core parts of prevention, early intervention, treatment, recovery, and wellbeing support.

To deliver meaningful impact, the Strategy must be supported by sustainable investment in Asian-specific and culturally responsive models of care, stronger commissioning pathways for trusted community providers, workforce development that builds cultural and linguistic capability, and better disaggregated data to understand needs, access gaps, service experience, and outcomes.

Achieving equitable outcomes requires a shift in system design. It is not enough for existing services to adapt after the fact. Services must be intentionally designed with and for Asian communities, grounded in evidence, cultural knowledge, community voice, and lived experience.

Ngā mihi,



Dr Kelly Feng MNZM

CEO, Asian Family Services

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