



NZACAP

New Zealand Association
of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists Inc.

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Honorable Anne Tolley
Social Development Minister

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Dear A Tolley

On behalf of the New Zealand Association of Child & Adolescent Psychotherapists
We would like to voice our concerns over the plight of the clients of the Relationships
Aotearoa Service.

We understand that, at times, some services can not meet government requirements and
undergo professional and political stressors that mean the service is no longer viable. We
do not wish to comment on the validity or viability of the Relationships Aotearoa Service.

Our professional concern is the emotional and psychological damage that could be done
to the vulnerable clients engaged in that service by abruptly and publicly halting their
relationship with their counsellor. We understand that the people using the RA service
were those needing emotional support to cope with such devastating experiences as; the
Christchurch earthquakes, physical and emotional abuse, domestic violence, or sexual
offending. This service also offered counselling for couples, for children whose parents
were separating, and for work place conflicts

The process of therapy is predicated on the relationship that is developed between the
counselor and the client. Decades of research indicate that the provision of therapy is an
interpersonal process in which a main curative component is the nature of the therapeutic
relationship. We, as the NZACAP, are concerned that a vital component of the counselling
process has been negated by the rapid shutdown of Relationship Services. We are also
concerned that the importance of the therapeutic relationship, the working through of
termination issues and the transfer to another therapist has been cut across rather than
facilitated by the decision to terminate the Relationship Aotearoa Service.

As registered psychotherapists we have an agreement with the government (**pursuant to The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA) *The principal purpose of this Act is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing for mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise their professions***) to advocate for the best possible practice for the public.

NZACAP holds that the actions of the government and Relationship Services, by closing the doors on the current clients of this service, have acted in a way, contrary to the HPCAA. We believe that the Government could mitigate the impact of this closure by ensuring that clients are supported as they transition to another counsellor. We are particularly concerned for the more vulnerable client, who may be younger, have more serious mental health issues or still very traumatised and who will need a careful transition to a new counselor.

We would suggest that the Ministry of Social Development needs to identify the high risk clients and appoint a mental health professional to ensure the clients safety over this transition time. We would also encourage the Ministry of social Development to provide at some funding to allow for at least one session with their counselor with the purpose of supporting the transition and plan the transition to a new counselor. This would go some way to ensuring this process of shutting down service is more therapeutically responsive and effective for the clients of Relationship Aotearoa.

Yours sincerely

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