

**5 December 2018**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Students want a seat at the table – VUWSA backs He Ara Oranga recommendations**

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) receives the release of He Ara Oranga with open arms.

The report makes it clear the mental health system needs an overhaul, with people and their lived experiences at the centre of any future decision-making. VUWSA has been waiting for this report as we know our students are struggling, but know they're only snapshot of what New Zealand is dealing with.

This report stands out among other government inquiries in that it has actionable, practical recommendations based on the experiences of communities in Aotearoa and what they think is going to help.

However if this process is going to be successful, solutions must be co-designed with communities, including those from the tertiary sector.

Students must have a seat at the table. As a community organization that has worked hard campaigning for solutions to this issue, VUWSA is keen to work in partnership with Government to address poor mental health in its communities and on campus.

Hundreds of students marched to Parliament in August this year with a message of hope for their peers and a request for the government to do more, and this report shows there is now a clear direction for how mental health and wellbeing should be looked at in Aotearoa.

### **Incoming VUWSA 2019 President Tamatha Paul says:**

*"It is the aroha, manaakitanga and sense of whānau inherent within "community" where we will find the necessary care and diligence to resolve the mental health problem in New Zealand."*

*"Students don't come to tertiary institutions as blank slates – so without addressing systemic issues in our society and in our health system means our institutions will continue to be used as an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, dealing with much more than just 'uni stress' but having to tackle complex issues that they are not currently resourced for."*

*"That's why we rallied. Hundreds of students demanding that the government **listen to us**. He Ara Oranga sets a precedent for our voices to not only be heard, but finally acted on."*

*"Having to wait weeks or months for counselling services is not good enough, especially when tertiary institutions are the ones tasked with providing pastoral care to tens of thousands of young people many of whom working multiple jobs, accruing debt and living in poor housing."*

*"It is no surprise that there are a large number of students with poor mental health and wellbeing."*

**Outgoing VUWSA President Marlon Drake says:**

*“Tertiary students are a big part of the population, the leaders of tomorrow, and they need to be a big part of the solution too. We will be meeting with Minister Clark and we will be communicating to him we’re ready to do whatever it takes to make sure our students have access to the support they need.”*

*“Tertiary students fall within the significant “middle-ground” described in He Ara Oranga, which has been identified as lacking in support and resourcing.*

*“This report is a long term vision and we understand it will be a process to get to where we need to be, but looking ahead to the 2019 budget, it would be great to see provisions for tertiary providers to alleviate the pressure and demand on their mental health and wellbeing services, and to strengthen community wellness initiatives.”*

*“We need historic investment. Every single young person in New Zealand deserves support. You’ve got the research, you’ve got the mandate, now it’s time to spend the money.”*

**For more information contact:**

**Marlon Drake – VUWSA President (2018)**

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