

Supporting Under-served Rural and Provincial Communities

As part of Budget 20 we are improving access to support services for communities in regional Aotearoa New Zealand.

Budget 2020

We want to make sure that clients and communities in geographically isolated areas across Aotearoa New Zealand have continued access to Government and social services support.

The Government is investing just under \$19.8 million over four years to support under-served rural and provincial communities to provide access to government and non-government services, based on the existing Heartland Services model.

- This investment will strengthen support for rural communities to access the help, information and advice they require in their regions.
- The main services provided are through:
 - 28 Heartland service centres, a one-stop-shop access to Government services and community/voluntary agencies that deal with over 45,000 enquiries each year across Aotearoa New Zealand.
 - 32 Information and Advisory service providers, delivering a wide range of family-support services, including social and community support, access to other social services and running helplines.
- The investment aims to help with the cost pressures experienced by these organisations and will allow for increased service stability.
- Over the next two years the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will engage with providers and communities to strengthen the current service model to make sure rural community services are fit-for-purpose and meet local needs. MSD will also identify ways to build stronger relationships to ensure service availability in the regions.

- The impact of COVID-19 may also place additional pressure to deliver these services. MSD will work with providers to address any issues relating to increased demand.

Supporting information:

- Around 14% of New Zealanders live in rural areas and rural community services are often the only way for clients in geographically isolated areas to access a broad range of support services.
- Isolated community members have to travel significant distances to access the help they require, if it is not available in their communities.
- As rural residents are more likely to be older or from lower socio-economic backgrounds, having support in their local communities is vital to minimise isolation and lack of access to services.
- Current funding for MSD's rural community services is not adequate to meet the costs and demands of the service, and limits innovation to support the unique challenges faced by rural communities across the country.

Costs (operating) \$m

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	TOTAL
2.078	3.446	7.122	7.122	19.768