

REPORT TO NZAP COUNCIL, OCTOBER 2022

From the Public Issues Committee

This is a shorter report than usual brought about, in part, by the high degree of change in the larger health systems. It has meant the environment is changing profoundly in ways that affect both health and mental health and, potentially, our relationships with both. It has meant that, for now, many areas are restructuring with new personnel and reporting arrangements. Within the new areas, there is considerable uncertainty about how the new structures work; for us, there is uncertainty at present about who we now engage with until these new arrangements have settled.

So, to some extent, we have been in a holding pattern since July. There have been developments, however, on other fronts.

Psychotherapy Day

We are pleased to announce, for example, that we are launching our first Psychotherapy Day. This is an international initiative designed to publicise psychotherapy to the larger community. We have agreed to start small this year and will have held an NZAP zoom on September 26 with the involvement of our new President.

Climate day (Crisis) Focus.

We have invited psychotherapists to contribute three free sessions to recognize this day and its significance which some have taken up by the time of writing.

Allied Health: AHANZ

Victoria Smith is still seeking a meeting with Martin Chadwick on our behalf. This has been complicated and delayed by the health changes noted earlier.

NZASW

Similarly, Andrew Jones has had difficulty contacting the Association of Social Workers. This is part of our discussion of developing contact with a wide range of professional groups. They, like other groups, are overwhelmed, we believe, by the demand for services which all of us have been experiencing.

ACC

There have been recent changes within ACC. These have removed professional representatives, such as NZAP, in favour of specialist individuals chosen by ACC itself. Psychotherapy, fortunately, still has a voice by way of Diane Claire, but it is important to note the importance of this change. Victoria also had 6 hours of meeting with the new sexual violence group within ACC.

The Academy

There is a separate report about developments, but it is enough to note here that Claire and John have set up Signal messaging groups for our group, for the Academy and for two regional branches. This is to help with user experience but also to involve newer NZAP members in Association work.

Promoting Psychotherapy

Apart from the Psychotherapy Day, we have been discussing ways to increase our NZAP media skills and profile. We are considering a 'Savvy' media course for our team to enhance our online and media communication expertise.

Other initiatives

We have responded to an extensive report by Craig Whisker, Head of the ADHB Mental Health team. This contains much useful information about the employment of psychotherapists within the public system and we are grateful to have it (and will table this separately). We have also contacted other commentators, such as Helen Rook, on their statements about mental health in New Zealand; Lynne Holdem has recently sent an article about the medicalization of mental health to the UK Guardian. We have also continued to tweet on a variety of subjects and are continuing to expand our skillset around this.

Membership

We are very sad to lose Roy Bowden as a member of the Mental Health and Addictions Team. He has consistently provided insight and a wealth of experience which it is hard to replace. On the other hand, we are very pleased to welcome Clare Greensmith who brings a diversity of experience within the public system, and private institutions such as the Dunedin hospice and Ashburn Clinic.

I will add my gratitude to everyone on the team for their commitment, thoughtfulness and energy. The area in which we are working is a complex and difficult one, whether it is keeping NZAP's visibility alive or managing to comment on the sheer diversity of mental health issues that emerge. It is also a pleasure to be part of this team as our profuse and spontaneous Signal activity indicates.

The present Academy team is: Victoria Smith, Veronica Watt, Claire Miranda, Andrew Jones, Lynne Holdem and Clare Greensmith.

John Farnsworth
Chair, Public Issues