

REPORT TO NZAP COUNCIL, JUNE 2023

Public Issues

As always, Public Issues covers a wide tranche of areas. The Mental Health and Addictions Committee endeavours to meet with and play a role in, influencing the changes in Mental Health, along with the ACC and Allied Health Portfolios.

Mental Health and Addictions Committee:

In late 2022 John Farnsworth stepped down from leading Public Issues to focus on his role in setting up the Academy. Victoria Smith took over as the Chair. We were also sad to say goodbye to Roy Bowden who resigned from the Committee; however, we were delighted to have Clare Greensmith join us. The MH and Addictions Committee remains a hard-working group with several members, including Andrew Jones, Clare Greensmith, and Veronica Watt as non-Council members.

The whole group, consisting of Lynne Holdem, Veronica Watt, Claire Miranda, Clare Greensmith, Andrew Jones, and John Farnsworth, has been very dedicated and I as Chair am very grateful to them, and for the time they have put into it.

It would be fair to say that with all the changes in the health services, our Mental Health and Addictions group has struggled with finding our *raison d'être* and our role in the new arrangement. Yet, we have attempted to continue meeting with principals in the new service. Personnel in the Health services have changed, and it has taken quite a while for the new lines of management to become clear. The reality of a voluntary group attempting to liaise with the Public Health juggernaut is both confusing and daunting, and at times it has sapped our energy.

Most recently, the group has begun to refocus on thinking about ways to promote Psychotherapy within the wider public arena. We retain a connection, for example, with Ora Taiao, the climate action group through Claire Miranda. One of our greatest concerns, however, is the invisibility of NZAP in the public sphere. We have been grappling with the following questions:

- 1 How can we get NZAP more known in the Public arena? How do we bring Psychotherapy into daily life?
- 2 Do we want to get Psychotherapy recognized as a necessary discipline by Government, therefore being in a position to ask for financial assistance for more training?
- 3 How do we get more Psychotherapists into the Public Sector?
- 4 Are we wanting to bring a Psychotherapeutic perspective to Mental Health issues? 5 What is Mental Health vs Normal distress?
- 6 What is the Psychotherapeutic response to catastrophe/climate change?
- 7 Are we wanting to provide a critical voice of conscience in the public arena?

We are keen to involve interested members in taking part in any of these areas. As a start, Claire Miranda and Victoria Smith attended a Scientific Media training and the group has started practising writing articles for potential media releases. As part of World Psychotherapy Day, Victoria and Seán Manning held a Zoom meeting for members celebrating Psychotherapy and our appreciation of our work. It is hoped that another event is arranged aiming for a wider audience in 2023. Claire Miranda set up a Twitter account under the NZAP banner and has made a number of tweets on our behalf, however lately the group has thought that a LinkedIn account with regular updates from us, might fit what we want to do more appropriately.

ACC:

Victoria Smith was successful in regaining a role on the redeveloped Sexual Violence Customer Advisory Panel which she has already held for the past 3 years. This group has been very involved in advising (and challenging where appropriate) the new ACC contract for Sensitive Claims that will be rolled out in 2024. There are also many other areas that the SVCAP are asked to advise on such as prevention programmes and ACC have been at pains to make the panel more diverse to meet the needs of our more diverse society. Victoria has held semi-regular Zoom meetings with NZAP ACC Providers and Suppliers which members seem to find helpful.

Allied Health Association of New Zealand (AHANZ):

Victoria Smith has continued to meet with this group. There is a wide diversity of allied health professions represented in this group and they have considerable success in lobbying for their members. AHANZ regularly meet with Martin Chadwick head of Allied Health for the MOH.

To conclude, although Public Issues remains a challenging area, the group is lively, thoughtful and good spirited, often reflected in the very active and imaginative Signal app that we use and I remain grateful for the ongoing input from the group members..

Victoria Smith
Chair of Public Issues

