



REPORT TO APANZ Annual General Meeting (AGM), June 25 2025

Re: President's Report

From: John O'Connor, President APANZ

Date: 25 May 2025

Introduction

Kia ora koutou,

The year since the APANZ June 2024 AGM been a busy, productive, creative and at times challenging time for our Association, for psychotherapy in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand, and the communities within which we all live. The following is an overview of my reflections on this period.

Council members

It is wonderful to be with such a vibrant and thoughtful group around the council table. Council continues to meet monthly on the third Monday of each month for an hour and a half, plus two in-person meetings over a weekend each year, with the most recent in person weekend meeting held on 10 and 11 May 2025, in Auckland. Claire Miranda, our Digital Communications Committee Chair, and her team, continue their creative work in enhancing APANZ's digital communications. Gabriela Mercado, our Past President, has been invaluable in all manner of matters, and in particular has been active in continuing the work on the Academy site (now named Nexus), the psychotherapy learning hub for the Association's membership, which was launched in November 2024. Susan Horne, the Chair of the Te Tririt Bicultural Committee is continuing her very thoughtful work in this area, including building a new committee team, and activating its important work. Verity Armstrong and Anna Flemming have continued you to offer their dedicated and passionate work as Waka Oranga Council representatives. Kate Dent Rennie provides very capable leadership as Chair of Ethics, Vijay Mahantesh is thoughtfully working in his role as our new Honorary Secretary, and doing excellent work in preparation for the AGM, Jane Tuson continues to enact the role of Treasurer with creativity, precision and skill, and ordinary members Jo McKenzie and Kathryn Mackenzie continue to offer fresh and perceptive eyes on the work of Council, with Kathryn also joining Claire's digital communications team, and Jo working with Gabriela on the last issue of the APANZ newsletter in 2024, as well as important contributions in many other areas. We are an energetic Council.

Farewell to our former administrator Luisa Maloni

At the end of 2024, we farewelled our wonderful previous administrator, Luisa. Luisa's warm, generous spirit, skilful eye for detail, and support of so many initiatives within the Association, including the recent conference last year, the Ata journal, and the ACP training pathway, were great gifts to us all. Auckland members of Council had a lovely lunch to farewell Luisa, and we

had planned a zoom farewell for the wider membership. However, Luisa in her humble way, felt she had been farewelled enough, and left us with much gratitude. A few months later she wrote me this email to the membership:

Dear APANZ members,

What have you been up to? I feel so out of the loop!!! I just wanted to say a final goodbye to you, now that we are well into 2025 and the holidays are a distant memory... did they even happen?

John had asked me to take part in a zoom event to farewell me but I really thought you all needed a night off! I was lucky enough to attend a farewell lunch with members of council and received a beautiful gift, a ceramic art work, along with some really lovely words of farewell, and I also received some very touching emails from you before I left, and I felt that I may be pushing it for another round of farewells via Zoom...

I am so far surviving in my new role, so much to learn as is the case with any new job but feeling well supported and I am enjoying being back in the classroom (as a visitor 😊) and working with deaf and hard of hearing children again. In saying that I do miss you, and as I have said before will always treasure my time at APANZ, and will forever be amazed and inspired by the work you do as psychotherapists. Thank you once again for the wonderful opportunity of being a small part of that world.

Wishing you all the best for you and your loved ones in 2025.

Arohanui,
Luisa

Arohanui, Luisa, we are so grateful.

Welcome to our new administrator Carmel Lai.

We were nervous about whether we could in short time at the beginning of this year find a new and capable administrator. More than capable, we are so blessed and fortunate to have found in Carmel such a wonderful, kind, generous, warm and enormously able person. Carmel has fitted in so smoothly and worked so effectively and swiftly to find her feet in this busy role. Carmel brings an eagle eye for detail, technological know-how, and an enormous and warm heart. We are so delighted to have you with us Carmel and so enjoying your thoughtful work.

June 2024 – 2025 period

Over the past year, APANZ Council and membership have engaged with and achieved much. Significant matters include:

1. The 2024 Conference: we are grateful to the organising committee of the conference, which explored issues of psychotherapy, gender and sexuality. The work of the conference team of Gavin Stansfield, Verity Armstrong, Paul Wilson, Sally-Anne Thomson, and Claire Virtue, was offered with huge commitment and passion. Thank you for all your efforts. We know that the conference theme was controversial and brought with it many challenges. We appreciate also the membership who attended and engaged with such integrity as we together explored complex territory.
2. The Nexus website, developed out of the creative input of John Farnsworth and his team, came to fruition late 2024, with the launch of the website, the Nexus APANZ psychotherapy learning hub. We are delighted to see this now launched, with particular

thanks to Gabriela for her dedicated work in bringing this to fruition and bringing multiple learning opportunities to the membership and wider public.

3. Council finalised its response to the SOGICE report and developed new policy and guidelines in relation to working with psychotherapy, sexuality and gender, particularly in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts. We know this has been a controversial area for the Association to navigate and we hope we can all remain committed to continuing to learn together.
4. Rick Williment was appointed as the new chair of our Public Issues Committee, and in close consultation with his committee and myself, have developed a range of responses on public issues. Together we have generated submissions in relation to proposed legislation regarding the regulation of the health workforce, legislation in relation to puberty blockers and healthcare, and I wrote a submission regarding the proposed Te Tiriti principles legislation. And Rick and his committee along with me, wrote in response to the Minister of Health's request for input, advocating for psychotherapy in the public health system. I also wrote a robust submission in response to the survey from the Minister of Health, Simeon Brown, considering changes to the regulation of the health workforce, including the possibility of amalgamation of regulatory health boards. I say more about these matters later in this report.
5. I have also been active in advocating within APANZ, within public mental health, and more broadly, in support of the retention of Segar House – Rauarohe specialist psychotherapy service, the only public mental health specialist psychotherapy service in Aotearoa New Zealand, a service that is currently under threat of being discontinued.
6. We are very grateful to Sue Morrison, Catriona Cairns, Diane's Zwimpfer, Helen Florence, and Eric Metcalf, for their sterling work as they engage in organising, with Council support, the APANZ Conference and preconference workshop to be held in Wellington in February 2026. It should be a stunning event, and we look forward to being able to gather together for this.
7. Gabriela Mercado and I continue to facilitate the monthly online zoom meetings entitled "Mindfields: thinking spaces" which is proving a helpful space for thinking with the membership about psychotherapy and our Association within the context of this country.

Initiatives which Council are focused on at the moment include:

1. I met recently with ACC psychotherapists within APANZ membership, in preparation for liaising further with ACC, regarding members' experiences of the recently implemented ACC contract for sensitive claims. We will also be enabling regular meetings for ACC registered APANZ members to meet.
2. Ongoing development of the Nexus psychotherapy learning hub for members of the Association, which Claire Miranda and her team are picking up, following Gabriela's departure from Council.
3. Council is now working on the apology which Council has agreed to in relation to the SOGICE report to be delivered in August this year. I recently met along with Gabriela, with the APANZ Rainbow Rōpu in service of planning for the apology. We also intend to liaise with Waka Oranga and the Pacifica group within APANZ. We are very grateful to the Rainbow Rōpu for their ongoing liaison with us.

4. I have been reflecting with Council, regarding the structure of our Association, and the challenges we face given the wider political and cultural context. Our membership is growing, and the demands on volunteers in the administration of our Association increase. I reflect further about these matters below.

Challenges

Internal challenges

Whilst there are many creative and exciting initiatives underway within the life of the Association, there are also some significant challenges. Our Association runs on the energy, passion and input of Association members all of whom are volunteers. This in my view is becoming increasingly challenging, given that membership numbers are rising, and the political, social and cultural context within which we work, becomes increasingly fraught and challenging. This has consequential effects on the workload of all members who contribute to the life of the Association, particularly those for whom the workload is significant, including council members, chairs of committees, and those who run the ACP training pathway for our Association. This means that there are challenges in engaging members to contribute, for very understandable reasons. Currently we do not have an editor for our digital newsletter, or our very important peer-reviewed psychotherapy Journal *Ata: Journal of psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand*.

This challenge regarding participation is one we must all face. For many of us this Association has very deep meaning. To maintain our life and vitality as an association, we need to explore creatively how to resource the Association in terms of membership input, and our structure. I will be proposing to Council over coming months ideas for addressing these challenges. I invite members to also contribute your creative thinking in relation to these challenges.

A central challenge concerns the vision and purpose of our Association and Council's role in this, with much of our regulatory function now having passed some time ago to the registration board (PBANZ). Given this, the focus of our Association, I believe needs to be on developing a culture of associating, learning, and enhancing opportunities for membership to grow their theoretical and clinical understanding, and intellectual, emotional and spiritual engagement with the art and craft of psychotherapy in this country, both within the microcosm of our clinical work, and the macrocosm of the wider sociopolitical context. This is a challenging endeavour. In doing so we encounter our differences. These can be theoretical, clinical, and personal and political. Creative forums for robust, respectful, and honest dialogue about these differences I believe is vital to the life of our Association, and the collective health, of our society. I invite members to keep engaging, particularly with our differences, in service of this creativity.

The challenges of the external social, cultural, and political context:

Proposed health workforce regulation changes, political dilution of the cultural and constitutional significance of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and further marginalisation of those already disadvantaged.

Related to the internal challenges within our Association, we also face many challenges concerning the wider context within which psychotherapy is operating currently in this country. The first time I spoke with someone who expressed thoughts of wanting to end their life, it was 1988 and I was a 23-year-old telephone counsellor at Youthline, Auckland. If there is one thing I have learnt over these decades of being with others in distress, it is that isolation kills people,

and community saves lives. It is therefore heartbreaking to see that in the current political climate, far from building community, so much is occurring which appears, whether intended or not, to further alienate, isolate, and disempower the most disadvantaged in our communities.

Whether it be recent undoing of pay equity legislation, impacting on jobs so often involving caring for our most vulnerable by lower paid, predominantly female workers, or the continued undermining of the status of Māori as tangata whenua reflected in attempts to dilute the constitutional and cultural significance of te Tiriti o Waitangi via the misguided so-called “Treaty Principles Bill”, recent political initiatives are undermining social cohesion as they detrimentally and disproportionately impact upon those already socio-economically and culturally disadvantaged.

This ethos is now reflected in the Minister of Health, Simeon Brown’s survey regarding possible changes to the regulation of health workers, in which the relevance of “cultural considerations”, is questioned, ignoring the clinical reality of Māori overrepresentation in health and mental health statistics. And Deputy Prime Minister, Winston Peters, is proposing “gender” legislation, once again likely to harm and psychologically undermine already vulnerable members of diverse gender communities. Most recently our newly appointed ACC Minister, Scott Simpson, has questioned the suitability of ACC as a provider of funding for therapy for clients who have experienced sexual assault.

These seemingly disparate initiatives appear to share a common theme: the current government’s intention to further sideline the most disenfranchised in our communities, in the service of so-called “freedom” and “economic prosperity”. These ideologically informed critiques have very real consequences at the coalface of the mental health crisis manifesting in this country, and with which we all interface daily in our clinical work.

Recent legislative initiatives, and in particular proposed changes regarding health work force regulation, as well as the other legislation mentioned above, all appear to have an ideological underpinning that in my view is likely to increase tensions, and fragility in relation to social cohesion and sense of community, all with significant consequences for mental health in this country. Given the wider global political context, and the increasing and potentially devastating challenges of human induced climate devastation, we all as an Association I think have a need to think about these challenges and this wider context, and to contribute to dialogue which enhances rather than detrimentally impacts on community, and on community and individual mental health.

I look forward to talking about these challenges and how we might respond when we meet.

Thank you to all, Council members and membership, for your ongoing dedication and contribution to the life of our Association

Ngā mihi

John O’Connor

APANZ President