

# Public Issues Committee's (PIC) Report to the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand (APANZ) AGM 2026

19 May 2026

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This report covers the period November 2025 - May 2026

1. The PIC is delighted to have Council member Kathy McKenzie join us for the purpose of assisting with psychotherapist's interface with ACC, and with each other as a sub-set of the membership doing this work. Also we have welcomed Ingrid Gunby, psychotherapist from Christchurch/ Ōtautahi who has a public policy background, to the committee. A warm welcome and our appreciation to both Kathy and Ingrid.
2. The PIC is in the process of developing our strategy, both in terms of the content we think is most valuable to explore, and also in terms of how we communicate/ reach the public or particular audiences.
3. As we have communicated previously, it has been difficult to find mainstream media willing to publish/ print PIC content. To this end we have resolved to develop a social media presence that may offer a number of benefits, namely, a place for psychotherapists to share practice-related information; a place for long-form articles to be posted; places for the promotion of psychotherapy and connection of psychotherapists.
4. The PIC is in the process of approaching students with an interest and expertise in social media spaces to potentially join the committee and develop this programme of work.
5. There is an intention to appeal to the membership to write, speak, dialog publicly, rather than the PIC being viewed as the primary public-facing mouthpiece.
6. In terms of output and the committee's intentions, Brigitte Viljoen wrote a letter to the Minister for mental health on the dangers of unregulated Artificial Intelligence as it has demonstrated offering devastating advice and information to some suicidal persons, tragically. The Minister's response did not address many of the concerns expressed, and a direct and somewhat challenging response has been drafted. The original letter is posted on the APANZ website.
7. The PIC hosted a dialog with Dr Kerry Antilla-Thomas (Head of AUT's psychotherapy training programme) about the possibility/ perceived need for a second tertiary academic psychotherapy training programme (located within an academic institution) in New Zealand. The PIC will continue to discuss whether this is a priority to pursue. In the meantime we have sent a letter expressing strong support for the AUT programme to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor. Given the sense of tenuousness as Kerry presented to the recent conference, it seemed important to let those responsible for the programme to know that there are features of their psychotherapy education that are uniquely valuable to the field, and therefore to the public.
8. The PIC is researching Health Workforce NZ's stance in relation to psychotherapy.
9. The PIC has drafted a document describing its role and functioning, which may be of benefit to future committee membership. A four weekly schedule of meetings is in place and there is enthusiasm to advance the work of the committee.
10. The committee learned, late in the piece, of the Minister for Mental Health's consultation on strategy for mental health for the next ten years. The committee Chair responded to the consultation as an individual, especially advocating for the inclusion of the 'private' mental health

workforce in the continuum of care and more formally/ structurally linked to both primary care and community mental health and addiction services.

11. The committee is working on a draft summary of what psychotherapy is, and its evidence base, for circulation to bodies such as ACC, The Ministry of Health and community mental health services.

Rick Williment, Chair