

25.09.20

Talofa Minister of Health Hon. Chris Hipkins,

As Mental Health Awareness Week comes to a close I wanted to write to you to thank you for the work Dr Robyn, Dr Ashley and the wider Government are leading to ensure support is ever increasing for peoples mental health and wellbeing during this difficult time. As you may have heard from when 2018 Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry stories were told in media, there were so many tragic stories, people spoke to there being a spirit of hopelessness and heartache touching so many people in Aotearoa. I just want to acknowledge what one bereaved family member said to us that we included in part of in our report.

“My father committed suicide in 2015. ... If my father, an educated, intelligent, creative, powerful man, could not get access to the help he needed – even when he was persistent and explicit in seeking it – what hope does this system have of helping those even more vulnerable than he? (Family of service user)¹

We were blessed to hear from the people across Aotearoa that alongside this pain there is hope, and a strong desire that mental health and addictions not be an political, nor election football, and that we needed to move the focus to also look more nationally at mental wellbeing, rather than what to many has felt like an illness focus alone.

“Mental wellbeing isn’t just about the absence of mental distress or harmful substance use... being creative and having fun; contributing to our communities; having control over our lives; and mattering to other people..”²

One of those areas that kept coming up was people being able to participate in creativity alongside others. Panel Member Dean Rangihuna and I visited the Ōtautahi Creative Spaces (OCS) here in Christchurch and met the artists who were able to be in a community of peers who understood their lived experience, and through creativity connect and process the challenges they faced. I am not sure if you have had the privilege to visit OCS, or the Manawatu based King Street Artworks which we heard phenomenal things about too. It was important that we reflected on these special spaces

¹ He Ara Oranga – Page 54

² Page 82

in He Ara Oranga.

“A variety of arts, cultural and sporting programmes and initiatives are not typically considered ‘mental health services’. They may, however, support mental health and wellbeing. Some specifically focus on providing opportunities for people with mental health and addiction challenges to participate in these everyday activities.”³

“We also heard that the legacy of shame and stigma that has surrounded mental health remains a barrier to seeking help. People agreed that awareness and understanding of mental health challenges has improved in recent years, thanks to promotional campaigns and the actions of thought leaders in many sectors, including sport, business and the arts. But they said shame and stigma continue to shape attitudes and are embedded in our laws and the way services are structured and delivered.”⁴

It was not lost on us that for many New Zealanders including myself, our ability to process our distress has been greatly aided by people using the arts to share their stories, and for us to participate in them. At school I performed in choirs, theatre shows, musicals - the connection and purpose in these spaces supported my wellbeing. I have a lived experience of depression, and during lockdown sharing music covers my flatmates and I made to share awahi with others, this was a blessing for my wellbeing too.

I remember back in 2018 during the Inquiry a number of submissions were brought together by brilliant artists including Addictions Wellbeing leader Edward Kitchin. Ed not only wrote, and professionally recorded “My Song Sheet” he also created a website to submit to the Inquiry; in my view he created an anthem that grows the awahi of how we journey forward.⁵ When I listen to this precious waiata now it has me near tears thinking about the hopes Aotearoa placed on our shoulders on their behalf, and the vision He Ara Oranga speaks about - that he also sings about. We need anthems to bring our collective focus, and we need to elevate this one in the ongoing action on mental health and addictions wellbeing.

Another very precious taonga was the *Outloud* report from Rainbow YOUTH and #WeAreBeneficiaries. The art, stories and their thinking about the future was exceptional.⁶ This taonga shows us how we can make participation in democracy something that is more meaningful

³ Page 31

⁴ Page 62

⁵ <https://www.mysongsheet.com/>

⁶ <https://ry.org.nz/who-we-are/news/report-shows-current-mental-health-and-addiction-system-is-vastly-under-serving-aotearoa-new-zealands-rainbow-communities>

for participants when encouraged to share in a way that better speaks to all of who they are, including their creativity. I am not sure how widely across this Government has been seen. I would please encourage you Minister to ask officials to report back two years on and whether elements are being addressed. This Outloud report brought an online community together in an approach that we encouraged even more people to take up.

“Although lots of vibrant community hubs exist throughout New Zealand – around schools, sports clubs, arts centres, marae and churches – many people are isolated from their neighbours and local communities. We have much to learn from cultures that value collectivism and emphasise family, spirituality and connection to each other and the natural environment.”⁷

A document that Ōtautahi Creative Spaces gave me while we visited I have included below which speaks to the vision we could see. We also speak to this in He Ara Oranga.

“Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people in our society is everyone’s responsibility. The health system is one important player but, to make genuine progress, we must look further afield to solutions outside the health system and outside government. This has long been known but has been difficult to action.”⁸

I know Professor Ron and many of our former team wish to see the arts space given greater recognition in mental health and wellbeing initiatives. I see this as being a crucial pillar of the Big Community Wheel of responses and workforces we talk about in S- 3.6.

I also send you my encouragement for your own wellbeing, that of your Parliamentary colleagues and that of our wellbeing workforce in Government during such a time of pressure. May you all be well blessed – fa’amalosi – keep it up!

Manuia le aso,



Josiah Tualamali’i

Former Panel Member

Oranga Tāngata, Oranga Whānau - Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction

⁷ Page 66

⁸ Page 98

Ōtautahi Creative Spaces

Provided to
Oranga Tāngata, Oranga Whānau - 2018

Ōtautahi Creative Spaces is a creative wellbeing initiative in Christchurch. Our mission is to strengthen the wellbeing of artists who have experience of mental distress in Ōtautahi through transformative creative arts programmes. We do this through creativity groups, artist mentoring, and by brokering opportunities for engagement in the contemporary art world. People generally access our programmes through community and CDHB mental health support, but this is not a requirement – we welcome people who hear about us in a range of ways.

We have special partnerships with Totara House, early intervention service for young people – CDHB; and Kakakura Health Services – Māori mental health service and residential home Te Korimako.

Our impact

Internationally there is substantial evidence of the benefits of arts and health programmes¹, and this is confirmed by the Trust’s own research (*Evaluation for Ōtautahi Creative Spaces*, Ihi Research, December 2017).

This research concludes that becoming an artist in a highly creative, resourced and supportive community of practice - a community of artists - transforms identities and contributes to wellbeing.

Key points from our submission to the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry

Where we are now	Where we want to be in five years’ time
National arts and health policy	
No national arts and health framework	An embedded arts and health framework adopted (cross-party and multi-departmental) and acted on by government.
Funding for arts and health	
No funding stream for arts and health programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arts and health funding allocated through Vote Health including an innovation fund. ○ The funding allocation allows for higher needs in Christchurch following the earthquakes.
Fair and equitable funding process	
Community mental health funding is controlled by DHBs with no transparency of process and inequitable access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A range of funding mechanisms have been considered, including a commissioning agency and individualised funding, and an improved process established. ○ Funding criteria based on outcomes and consumer/Takata Whaiora choice which ensures equitable access, accountability for outcomes and consumer/Takata Whaiora involvement in decision making.

Successful creative wellbeing initiative Ōtautahi Creative Spaces operating in Christchurch where there are unprecedented mental health needs, on unacceptably low levels of funding, and receiving no funding from the Canterbury District Health Board, while demand continues to rise.	Ōtautahi Creative Spaces receives funding via Vote Health which is adequate to meet demand, give security to artists and staff, and allows for long term planning.
Arts on prescription	
No arts on prescription policy and no arts on prescription programmes operating.	Arts on prescription have been piloted, evaluated, resourced and implemented nationally.
Research into impact of arts and health	
Indigenous research and evidence base is limited.	Evidence base increased and in particular economic analysis undertaken showing the social investment return of arts and health programmes.
Access to creativity	
Barriers to engagement in creativity prevent some people from participating.	Barriers are minimised through transport solutions, location of creativity opportunities, income levels etc.
Access to creativity in inpatient mental health units is sporadic and inadequate; referral pathways to community creative wellbeing programmes is mixed and not systematic.	People receiving in-patient care have access to creativity facilitated by trained art workers, and are linked in with community creative wellbeing programmes.
Access to creativity in prisons and youth justice centres is variable around the country.	People in prisons and youth justice facilities have access to creativity facilitated by trained art workers, and are linked in with community creative wellbeing programmes.
Artist pathways	
Artist pathways are not well understood or supported with barriers to developing creative practice.	Artist pathways are established and supported, and barriers addressed eg benefit system rules about benefit entitlement and effect of income.
Artist leadership and peer support	
Artist opportunities for leadership and influence are limited.	Opportunities expanded for artist leadership and influence – valuing the knowledge of people with experience of mental distress.
Arts and health sector	
A fragmented arts and health sector, with models of good practice and innovation in creative wellbeing/arts and health programmes around Aotearoa/NZ. Not all areas have such programmes, and there is variation in services and reach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A network of creative wellbeing/arts and health organisations recognising the diversity of practice, sharing of knowledge, with adequate infrastructure and support, and benchmark standards for delivery. ○ A range of creative wellbeing programmes supported nationally including programmes within Te Ao Maori, and youth-led programmes. ○ Creative New Zealand investment strategy incorporates creative wellbeing, including a focus on capacity building and sector development and cohesion.
No workforce development for arts and health programmes	Arts and health is a viable career option and specialised training and internships are available.
Community wellbeing centres	
Community wellbeing centres established following the earthquakes eg Phillipstown Hub have no security of tenure or coordinated funding.	Community wellbeing centres thrive in neighbourhoods of high disadvantage, with security of tenure and funding.