

Margins 2 Mainstream Abstract Submission

TE HONONGA: CONNECTING FOR GREATER WELL-BEING – A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO FOSTERING COLLABORATION IN PROMOTION AND PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT

The New Zealand Mental Health Commission is a Crown Entity providing independent advice to Government in relation to the implementation of the national mental health strategy. The Commission's aims are to improve mental health and well-being, and to reduce the prevalence of mental illness, including addiction. The Commission acts as an advocate for the interests of service users and their families/whānau; promotes communication and collaboration amongst stakeholders; and addresses stigma and discrimination.

The Commission's strategic direction is described in the destination presented in *Te Hononga 2015: Connecting for greater well-being* (MHC, 2007). Te Hononga provides a unifying picture of mental health and well-being and is focused on synergies achieved whenever people come together, whether as families/whānau and communities, or as part of services, systems and sectors. The seminar will discuss how this strategic position has focused the Commission on advocating for a social inclusion approach to citizenship for people with mental illness.

The seminar will show the strength of the metaphor of *Te Hononga* – how using the synergies when services, systems and sectors come together will achieve the most effective use of resources and desired outcomes. The message becomes the vehicle to assist diverse sectors, services, and communities reach a shared understanding of positive mental health as a critical part of well-being. As a result of this understanding, a wide variety of health and social services are able to work collaboratively on preventing mental illness and distress in communities, promoting well-being, and increasing social participation.

The presentation will use *Te Hononga's* central message about the importance of family well-being in to illustrate how strategy can be used in the health sector, the wider social sector and communities to facilitate the promotion of well-being and the prevention of mental illness. It will discuss how the message of connectedness, central to *Te Hononga*, can support a wider understanding of how the well-being of each individual impacts on the whole (ie. the family), and how keeping the family unit (or chosen support network) well will enable the desired goals of participation, freedom from violence and no discrimination to be achieved.

The Charter recommendation coming out of the seminar is that the primary building block of well-being must be supporting the mental health and well-being of the family. It would also recommend that this should be founded on a unifying strategic direction.

REFERENCES

Mental Health Commission. 2007. *Te Hononga: Connecting for greater well-being*. Wellington: Mental Health Commission.