

REPORT TO NZAP COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 2021

Public Issues

The Public Issues portfolio continues to be a complex one – not only because it has a number of different strands to it, but because of the mental health environment and the impact of Covid. In that context, I am very grateful to be part of an active, capable, engaged group of colleagues and the variety of perspectives they bring in responding to these complexities. What follows is a brief, not a comprehensive, summary.

Mental health and the Ministry

Mental health continues to face ambiguities and shortfalls, widely reported in the media. This constantly challenges us to have a discernible influence in these conditions – but that's a common experience in the sector. We have also been developing an Incubator idea to generate thinking and critique around mental health issues in general.

One significant issue has emerged for NZAP and needs Council discussion. Veronica Watt and I have just had an insightful meeting with the Ministry of Health. It is shortly announcing widespread mental health training developments. However, NZAP will largely be shut out of these because our training is restricted to the ACP and cannot respond to them. This has important consequences for our long-term visibility and viability within what will be a rapidly changing, professionalizing sector where there are likely to be new and energetic competitors. My view is that Council needs a discussion about how it responds – inevitably, this must include training – if NZAP is not to be left with a potentially difficult future.

Public issues

These range widely, from approaches by Jan Logie of the Green Party, to support their push for wide ACC Reform in the Sensitive Claims area, to a proposal for an annual Psychotherapy Day, similar to other professions, to celebrate what psychotherapy offers.

Lynne and I met with investigators exploring the possibility of NZAC's renewed interest in registration. We have also raised the unexpectedly increasing cost of NZAP's group insurance. Separately, we were asked to support parties to the parliamentary select committee on transgender matters. Each of these matters is more complicated than it first appears and has occupied considerable time to assess and respond to.

AHANZ

I want to thank Victoria Smith, in particular, for her persistence on behalf of NZAP in clarifying numerous issues around the incoming vaccination mandates. These are critical to NZAP but we have often been left suspended with unclear, absent or shifting information and she has consistently followed this up. I also want to acknowledge Nikky Winchester's valuable role on our behalf in AHANZ as she leaves the Association. She has faithfully represented NZAP and our concerns and it will be a loss not to have her in this position.

ACC

The key issue within ACC recently has been the move towards shared information within ACC Sensitive Claims teams. It has raised ethical concerns amongst commentators; and there is still uncertainty about how this will resolve over time. We continue to monitor this closely. We know from direct involvement by members of our team that the actual changes have some positive and

negative consequences and are less alarming than portrayed. We also note the backlog of requests for treatment on the ACC system as a whole – something equally facing the entire DHB system.

Vaccination mandate

John, along with Paul Wilson as Chair of Ethics, is giving time to responding to member enquiries and criticism of NZAP's recent Inform advice. This continues to be a complicated, nuanced and time-consuming issue throughout the Association and has, unexpectedly, become an extra area of attention within Public Issues.

Summary

The sheer diversity of issues that Public Issues can cover is met by a consistently thoughtful and engaged response by every member of the Mental Health and Addictions team. My thanks to each of them: Roy Bowden, Veronica Watt, Victoria Smith, Andrew Jones and Lynne Holdem.

John Farnsworth
Chair of Public Issues