



AGM Report 2022

CEO and Chair

We are pleased to present our annual report of 2022 on behalf of the Trust Board and the WALSH Whanau for their resilience, passion, bravery, and commitment throughout a year of challenge and change.

Once again, our year has been disrupted by the Covid 19 global pandemic. The lockdown that began in August 2021, that morphed in the traffic light framework at the start of 2022, impacted not just on our work, but on life in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

In response our staff adapted, then re-adapted, then modified and adjusted, then repeating as required... with dexterity, commitment and good humour.

Our residentially based services were especially challenged with the need to ensure the safety of vulnerable people using the services - and staff - in closed environments. Through eternal vigilance and the use of skeleton-rosters, this was achieved professionally and successfully.

Not only did our support staff fulfil their obligations as an essential workforce, at the same time they needed to deal with their own anxieties, fears and concerns - as well as their obligations to family / whānau...

Thank you; your efforts have been selfless and inspirational.

It has been an insidiously tough time; an unrelenting challenge that has quietly taken its toll on people's resilience, sense of hope and those certainties of life that provide us with an essential anchor to "the everyday" experience of living.

We have to highlight Paula Armandi's leadership during this Covid period. It is unbelievable to now read our 2019 pandemic planning policy alongside the 2022 version. They are "chalk and cheese"; we have learnt so much. That process of learning and then applying those learnings in practice has been the direct result of Paula's diligence, patience and attention to detail.

We have lost count of the number of policy update's we received; all were essential to our successfully and safety navigating our way through the evolving "Covid environment".

The leadership of the Trust Board with countless zoom meetings has been strategic and focussed with Trustees giving time to making good decisions, hands on work and guidance. Looking across the WALSH Trust in 2022 we now comprise people of different generations, coming from completely and so many different backgrounds, with the broadest diversity of skills, interests, passions, talents - and foibles. We sometimes argue (often passionately) from different perspectives for different goals, different priorities. But what is always evident is that we all share, for all our differences, a fidelity to something higher - the higher ideals for which the founders of WALSH Trust stood for, that we hear so often from staff, and to which our organisational values consistently connect us, and inspire us to aspire too.

This is something we so value about working for WALSH Trust.

We are now speaking of an environment “post-Covid”. We have experienced a spike in staff illness; we are now challenged in dealing with very tight labour market conditions impacting upon all businesses’ abilities to recruit staff.

The impact and ripple effects of the Covid 19 pandemic - economic and social - are going to be felt for some years to come.

In fact, workforce represents our most significant challenge - and opportunity - for our future.

He Ara Oranga, the report into the Ministerial Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, drew two core conclusions,

1. New Zealand’s mental health and addiction problems cannot be fixed by government alone, nor by the health system.
2. We can’t medicate or treat our way out of the epidemic of mental distress and addiction...

A response to the above has to be bold. Basing planning around modelling of current workforce needs will not cut it. Asking questions such as: *How can we ensure community support workers are qualified to work in mental health and addiction, now and in the future?* Is not really the priority challenge for 2022.

To quote He Ara Oranga, this is “a once in a generation opportunity”. Where is the critical examination {for example} of the relevance of the role of nursing to people experiencing poor mental health and well-being? Is the scope of practice still relevant to working in a community context where partnering, engagement and collaboration across multiple sectors need to become essential core skills?

We believe an important question now needs to be: *How can we ensure registered health professionals are qualified to work in mental health and addiction, now and in the future?* In fact, the discomfort this question would create could well be indicative that we are on the “right path” advocated by He Ara Oranga.

He Ara Oranga does prescribe “a once in a generation opportunity”. Let’s allow others to “knock back” our visions for a future (and have the debates / arguments) rather than ourselves meekly starting “halfway back”!

This is the time for WALSH Trust and the non-government sector we are a part of, to take a strong lead in the development, improvement, and transformation of how New Zealand / Aotearoa responds to poor mental health and wellbeing in our communities. For some years we have been hearing the need for service responses to be based more “upstream”; in communities - engaged with people’s lives and their priorities for wellbeing.

This transformation needs to be launched on a platform of engagement, partnership, and collaboration; it needs to be “lived experience led”, with the participation of “expert voices”. This is very much a time of communities.

