



16 July 2018

Tēnā koutou katoa, Talofa lava and warm Pacific greetings

A busy few months on the road are coming to a close as the Inquiry moves into its next phase.

After more than 250 meetings with groups and individuals since March, meeting over 2,000 people in 24 centres from Kaitia to Invercargill at our *Meet the Inquiry Panel* community forums, and receiving nearly 5,500 submissions, we're now winding up our meetings, analysing all the information we've gathered and starting to write our report – which is due with Government in October.

As a panel we're immensely grateful for the time people have taken to share their stories, document their experiences and put forward their ideas on how to make things better for people living with mental health and addiction challenges, their families and our communities. We're humbled by the courage of those who have shared personal and difficult truths with us.

Many common themes have emerged. We've heard clearly that for many people, the current approach to mental health challenges and addictions is not working. People have made suggestions for creating a better mental health system and supporting wellbeing in our communities.

Some meetings will continue into August, especially with those who are harder to reach or who we want to hear more from. For instance, later this week panel members will be in Te Awamutu, meeting farmers and people from the rural community. We've had numerous requests for one-on-one and further group meetings and *Meet the Inquiry Panel* forums in towns we've not visited. We regret we have not been able to accommodate all these requests, given our very tight timeline.

Our main task now is to read and analyse all the submissions and meeting notes, reflect on them and form our recommendations. We're also completing a stocktake of programmes and services, and looking at the evidence of what's working in New Zealand and internationally, so we can identify what's currently in place and where the gaps and opportunities are.

We look forward to drawing on the wealth of information we've been given, forming our own views as a panel and shaping a set of recommendations that will set a clear direction – solutions that Government, the mental health and addiction sectors and the whole community can pick up and make happen.

It's an enormous challenge. But it's a challenge that many people around the country have risen to. We're determined to honour their voices and make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity for meaningful change.

Ngā mihi

Ron Paterson

Inquiry Chair