

NGO Council Update from Chair – February 2015



The first NGO Council meeting of 2015 was a busy one with many guests from the Ministry of Health coming to engage with us and exchange ideas.

I was heartened by the alignment of views from your [elected NGO sector representatives](#) and our Ministry visitors – with much agreement on which issues need to be worked on and similarities in ideas about how we might make progress.

Cross government approach

Acting Director-General of Health, Chai Chuah brought us up-to-date on the new Health Minister's priorities, some of which are highlighted in his [Letter of Expectations to DHBs](#). It was good to see a shift towards thinking more broadly across government in order to achieve outcomes, such as looking at wider determinants of health such as housing, social issues and physical activity – a clear connection to the Health Minister's other portfolio of Sport and Recreation.

If your NGO is working on specific health issues, it may be useful to know whether the Minister or an Associate Minister is responsible for these – this list is publicly available on [pages 10 and 11 of this document on the DPMC website](#).

The Director of [Health Workforce NZ](#), Graeme Benny was very receptive to our views and ideas too and highlighted the key role that primary and community providers will play in our future healthcare. His team are looking 20 years ahead to the needs of the whole health sector and have broadened the scope of HWNZ's planning beyond clinicians to include allied health workers and care and support staff. There was significant agreement that working in siloes will not work and that a community response needs the involvement of all. We were also reminded as NGOs to maximise opportunities for training of our own workforces – ensuring that we access funding through channels such as [Te Pou](#) or through MoUs with our local DHBs, which can enable our staff to participate in DHB-run training.

Approved Information Sharing Agreement for Vulnerable Children

Doug Gorman and Jane Dugdale from the Children's Action Plan team talked with us about the [Approved Information Sharing Agreement \(AISA\)](#) and the role of representative parties. While there are potential challenges in signing up to and managing this process, the benefit for non-profit providers that sign up to the AISA is that they will be able to access information held by government, with the appropriate consents of course. The AISA is likely to be introduced gradually so if your NGO is working in a region where a [Children's Team](#) is being set up, be sure to explore the potential benefits of being party to the AISA if you are working with vulnerable children and their families.

Financial matters

We heard again from Adrienne Percy who is leading the work on [Streamlined Contracting](#) for the Ministry of Health. The new contracting approach aims to improve the outcomes achieved for people and is part of the government's response to our sector's long-term call to improve the way it works with NGOs. The latest changes will initially affect disability support service and public health contracts that are due to be renewed on 1 July this year. The Ministry is working through this process with various groups and providers and will be putting out more information soon. If you are not already familiar with the [Results Based Accountability Framework](#), I encourage you to check out the [online training and information on the MBIE website](#) so you have a basis for your discussions with the Ministry.

While there were many positives discussed in our NGO Council meeting, we were also conscious of three areas of insidious costs, with potential to have a significant negative impact on non-profit health and disability providers. These are:

- Health and safety legislation changes
- [Proposed charging for Police checks](#)
- Changes to the fire regulations for residential services

While the motives for these changes may be well-intentioned, our sector cannot simply absorb these additional demands on our time and finances without support from government or targeted exemptions for community services. We will continue to keep a watching brief on these changes and raise concerns, as we hope you will also. One quick way to do this is through the current [petition on the Police Check fees](#).

Workshops on Accounting Standards & Good Governance

If your NGO has annual expenses under \$2m (Tier 3) or annual operating expenses under \$125,000 (Tier 4), be sure to register for one of the upcoming free seminars on the [New Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profits/Charities](#) – go to the [Charities Services website for details](#) on the workshops running from March through June this year.

The NGO Council will also be running further [Good Governance workshops](#) during this time in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and the central North Island – watch for registration information on these next month.

Until next time, Mauri Ora.

Donna Matahaere-Atariki

Chair, NGO Health & Disability Council

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