



Annual Report to Members

It is my pleasure to give Platform's 2011 Annual Report and my third as Chair.

Acknowledging our Christchurch colleagues

No report 2011 is complete without mentioning the devastating earthquake in Christchurch and acknowledging the impact this will have for many years to come. We have been filled with admiration for our Christchurch NGO colleagues, all of whom were affected in some way, but never wavered in ensuring services got to the vulnerable people who needed them.

We have also watched and learned as our traditional silos were broken down. Eligibility for support became a matter of need not a function of diagnostic label or level of severity of illness. Bureaucratic processes were unpicked in the interests of getting support to where it was needed quickly and with minimum fuss. Christchurch gave us an opportunity to show things can be done differently and that NGOs can lead these changes.

Challenging Environment

The last three years have been challenging for the sector and for Platform. We had a new government in late 2008 and had to build relationships with a new group of power brokers and politicians.

We had the global financial crisis in 2008, the ramifications of which are slowly and surely being felt in every aspect of our lives. We have seen a slow erosion of the strong central mental health leadership provided by the Ministry of Health's Mental Health Directorate and the Mental Health Commission.

Against this backdrop Platform's Trustees identified a number of priorities to guide our work.

Those were:

- a) To build relationships with the key influencers and opinion leaders in the sector
- b) To contribute to the design work and move beyond problem identification to promoting the NGO sector as part of the solution.
- c) To share information, offer intelligent commentary and help ensure providers were equipped to survive in a resource restrained environment.

In addition some of our work was directed at countering the commonly expressed view that there were too many NGOs and the value they contribute is at best unknown, at worst questionable.

Reasons for Optimism

It has been a challenging few years and the difficulties in the operating environment cannot be overstated. However, the overall mood is one of optimism and enthusiasm for the opportunities that are emerging as our mental health system is slowly being transformed from a secondary focussed system to a primary and community focussed system.

Key Pieces of work

Some of the defining pieces of work of the year have been the Health Workforce Report on mental health and addiction services and the Mental Health Commission's framework for the development of a new Blueprint.

These pieces of work signal opportunities for NGOs to make a significant contribution in a transformed and 'rebalanced' mental health and addiction support system. Some of the opportunities highlighted include:

- Greater investment in employment support
- Strengthening the whole continuum of consumer led initiatives from self-directed learning to peer support services
- Building relationships with primary health
- Supporting the capacity of whanau Ora providers to meet the mental health and addiction needs of their people
- Building partnerships with the justice sector
- Providing short term therapeutic interventions
- Providing affordable housing options and tenancy support

The territory that is being carved out is familiar territory. But the sector is being issued with a number of challenges. We are being challenged to think about new alliances particularly with social service and justice partners. We are being challenged to think more about our response to vulnerable children and young people. We are being challenged to think more clearly about our core business, our added value and how we can demonstrate the difference we make. Finally we are being challenged as to whether our workforce has the capability to fulfil the new roles in the space that is opening up. These are challenges Platform believes the sector is well placed to meet.

Challenges for Platform

Just as NGOs are having to position themselves and think about where they fit and what contribution they have to make, so too does Platform. Our own viability as an organisation is an ongoing issue. We are very dependent on our members, particularly our investing members, for their contribution. But our membership revenue is less than 20% of our total revenue. While we

have been fortunate to secure Ministry of Health contracts for core work we cannot avoid questions about the level of support from members, Platform's perceived value and our ongoing viability.

With the demise of the Mental Health Commission, as we know it, we also need to think about the shape of mental health leadership in the future and the possibility of building a coalition of agencies to support the Commissioner. NGOs are looking at greater collaboration. Our 'umbrella' organisations have to do the same.

Platform has made a significant contribution to the support of the National Information Collection. The work has not been without its difficulties and has felt at times, a thankless task. It is important that we now take the initiative as a sector and build on this data, demonstrating its value, developing our own progress and status reports and telling our own performance story.

Over the past year we have partnered with other organisations to provide a number of workshops on specific topics; one on employment support directed primarily at clinicians and one on information utility. The indications are that well planned workshops with high calibre presenters are valued. Platform Trustees have discussed extending this programme over 2012.

We have recently evaluated our performance as Trustees. This has highlighted a number of questions for us as to whether Platform is maximising its value as an organisation and how we juggle our various roles as leader, facilitator, informant, translator and advocate, at the same time as delivering value to members.

Two years ago we surveyed our members. That was a worthwhile exercise and confirmed that what was important for members was to know Platform was in touch with key players, knew what was going on, kept people well informed and ensured an NGO voice was present in the key debates. Those views continue to inform our work programme.

Final thanks

In closing I would like to say thanks to Marion and Anne. Platform is in the hands of two amazing and committed women.

Thanks also to Platform's nine Trustees. All are busy senior executives or CEOs who are generous with their time and make a contribution to Platform's work beyond what would normally be expected. Thanks particularly for the open and honest debate which helps ensure Platform acts with courage and integrity in the interests of a robust, well connected and innovative mental health and addictions sector. Finally Platform is privileged to be able to make a contribution to a sector of which we can all be proud and to work on behalf of such a committed group of members and supporters.

Jan Dowland

Chair