

Tū whitea te hopo!

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga rau Rangatira mā, e nga iwi o te motu

Tēna koutou katoa

Ko wai au?

Nō England ōku tūpuna, engari i tupu ake rātou i Australia, i te whenua moemoeā.

I tupu ake ahau i Australia, engari kei Aotearoa ahau e noho ana

Ko te kaitiaki matua ahau i Changing Minds – he mana tō te mātau ā-wheako

Tēnā koutou katoa.

I'd like to tautoko the acknowledgements of the previous speakers, to mana whenua, the initial Commission team, previous Commissioners and Government for paving the way, and add a few of my own. To Kaumata George, for speaking on my behalf and guiding my journey in te ao Māori over the past 5 years, for my Changing Minds whānau supporting me here today, as well as back at their desks, and most importantly, to my family, some of whom are here, and some overseas, who without their unwavering aroha I would not be alive today.

As a young(er!) woman, about halfway through my mental health journey the system gave up on me, and I did too. I was “treatment resistant” and told that what I was experiencing now (institutionalisation, ECT, medication) was what my life would look like. If someone told me then I'd be standing before you now with the great honour and responsibility of joining the inaugural Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission of a Country I didn't even live in at the time, I'd have said “and you think **I'm** mad!”

Today I look back on all the challenges and mistakes as a gift – (an unwanted one – the one you wish you could list on TradeMe the next day) but my mother taught me not to look a gift-horse in the mouth so I take it humbly and use it to not only give my life meaning, but others hope.

In joining the Commission, I don't just bring my story. I stand here today with and beside the thousands who gift us their stories and wisdom to use as tools to ensure their pain does not repeat, and that their flourishing (because of **not** despite challenge) gives hope, and inspires others.

I learned recently that "Inspire" comes from the Latin "to breathe life into" and, it reminded me of a recent opportunity I had to learn glass-blowing, and how perfect the process is as an analogy for what we will be tasked with at the Mental Health and Commission, and as a country – to create something functional and beautiful from a million grains of sand.

The first thing I made from glass was a 'blob' – it was neither useful or beautiful, but when you look through it, it acts as a lens through which you can see the world differently.

Like blowing glass, in the face of intense heat we will have to keep the system spinning without burning ourselves or others, and to do this well we must remain vigilant and present, but above all calm.

Like blowing glass, there's an urgency to the work - we can't pause or rest because any uneven momentum can throw the whole thing off centre.

We can mould and shape it carefully – at arm's length, and add colour – but until we subject it once again to heat we have no idea how these colours will react with each other

My favourite part of glass-blowing is the moment you think you have the shape just about right – in that moment you have to go against your intuition and flip it upside down, trust it to someone else's pole (or punty) and the bottom becomes the top. Only then do you start to see what you've created. This is the moment of transformation.

The beautiful thing about glass, is that although the ingredients are the same, no two pieces are alike. I have heard glass-blowers describe their final pieces as 'the sum of every mistake they've ever made' – not perfect, but still beautiful.

Our challenge in transforming our Mental Health and Addiction landscape will be to create an Aotearoa that values not only uniqueness, but the part each and every one of us plays in growing wellbeing.

Just as glass cannot be made from a single grain of sand, wellbeing is not one person, one organisation or one government's soul responsibility – but the melting together of us all.

Nā te Mātau ā-whēako tatau katoa e kotaki nei  
We are all connected by our lived experience

Thank you