

31 May 2018

Tēnā koutou katoa, talofa lava and warm Pacific greetings

The Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction has been on the road since late April with panel members listening to people from around Aotearoa – hearing what’s working, what’s not and what could be done better.

Many of the stories we hear are personal and painful. We are humbled by people’s courage and willingness to share their own struggles and suggest improvements for the future.

We are also getting some very clear and constructive ideas from groups who work in the mental health and addiction area. Many have put a lot of work into this once-in-a-generation chance to set a clear direction and create hope.

At around halfway through our series of visits to 23 regional centres, we have a strong sense of people’s main concerns and ideas. Some common themes are emerging, as well as some unique local and cultural issues.

We typically spend the day hearing from individuals and groups including people with mental health and addiction challenges, their families and whānau, service providers, advocates, sector groups and experts. We have held hundreds of meetings since February and they will go on until late August.

We are meeting people from right across society and making a special effort to reach those who have a hard time making their voices heard. Last week, for example, we talked with prisoners inside correctional facilities in Auckland and Wellington.

In many regional centres we are also holding evening [Meet the Inquiry Panel](#) forums for the whole community. There has been a great turnout – around 1,000 people at nine community forums so far. Those who do not speak during the meeting often come up to us to share their stories afterwards, over tea and coffee.

After forums in Rotorua, Nelson and Blenheim, Auckland, South Auckland, Wellington and Masterton, we have been in the South Island this week, hearing from communities in Invercargill, Dunedin and Timaru – with a full slate of meetings during the day in all these centres as well as Oamaru. Next week we head north again and by early July we are back in the south.

Meanwhile, formal written submissions are rolling in. We have received over 1,800 so far.

**Formal submissions close on 5 June 2018 at 5.00pm.** If you or your organisation wants to make a submission, or you know someone who might, now is the time. Find out how at [www.mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz).

**You can help us get the word out.** Download a [social media or email reminder](#) of the deadline and send it to your contacts.

Our report is due with Government in October so we are on a tight timeline. We understand that for some individuals and organisations the 5 June 2018 submissions deadline might be too tight, so we will consider requests for extensions on a case by case basis. Get in touch with us at [mentalhealth@inquiry.govt.nz](mailto:mentalhealth@inquiry.govt.nz).

We also understand that people may have more thoughts after a [Meet the Inquiry Panel](#) forum and we are happy to accept these if people send them to us soon after a meeting.

Once again, thanks to all of you who have shared your stories and insights. We appreciate your courage and thoughtfulness. We look forward to continuing the kōrero in the coming months.

Hei konā mai

**Ron Paterson**  
Inquiry Chair

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