



New Zealand Association of Counsellors  
Te Roopu Kaiwhiriwhiri o Aotearoa

# COUNSELLING AOTEAROA

## Counselling Aotearoa April 2017

The April 2017 issue of Counselling Aotearoa, the "external" newsletter of the NZ Association of Counsellors / Te Roopu Kaiwhiriwhiri o Aotearoa includes stories about NZAC ensuring stakeholders of counselling are informed about the robustness of enhanced self-regulation, NZAC welcoming recommendations from the Privacy Commissioner's Report into the MSD proposed data collection policy, calls for more in-school support to deal with rape culture in NZ, Te Ahi Kaa Gay Puketapu-Andrews and Ethics Convenor Sue Webb to attend The International Counselling Conference in Buenos Aires and Shirley Pastiroff shares the benefits of her mindfulness-based counselling and mindful parenting solutions.

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## NZAC progressing self-regulation next steps

The NZ Association of Counsellors (NZAC) will soon ensure various stakeholders of the counselling profession are thoroughly informed about the robustness of its enhanced self-regulation.

President, Bev Weber, says this communication outreach initiative is part and parcel of the Association's responsibility to connect with members of the public and with government agencies, schools and corporates for whom NZAC members work.

"Quality counselling provided by a trusted NZAC professional is a valuable solution for many people facing personal challenges," she says.

"But we must be actively engaging the various stakeholders within the counselling profession to ensure they understand what our enhanced self-regulatory system will mean for them.

"Discussing the regime's three core components – a more rigorous CPD programme, new training and education standards for new entrants into the profession, and a rigorous and robust Code of Ethics – will demonstrate to them our commitment to their needs and the quality and professionalism of counselling in New Zealand."

Bev says there has been a lot of work behind the scenes to prepare and compile the necessary information with which to educate stakeholders.

She hopes to give all stakeholders, but especially employers of counsellors and clients of counsellors, heightened confidence in the integrity of the profession and the efficacy of the Association's services.

"We believe our enhanced self-regulatory regime will help stakeholders appreciate the quality and professionalism of our members.

"We have already received feedback from various stakeholders who believe our ongoing supervision, professional development programmes, and other robust frameworks are essential for counselling service providers to delivering efficient assistance.

"The enhanced self-regulatory regime will go a long way towards engaging with and supporting the counselling workforce to continue to do their work and do it well."



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## NZAC welcomes Privacy Commissioner's report into MSD

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) welcomes the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner's Report into the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) proposed policy which would allow them to collect individualised client level data from NGO agencies which they fund.

NZAC supports the [Report](#) and finds several points to be of particular interest.

The Privacy Commission argues that the collection of individualised client data may deter some of New Zealand's most vulnerable people from accessing the services that they need.

"The manner in which the policy change has been effected risks undermining the trust between individual service users and NGOs. This may deter some of the most in need from accessing necessary help because of the NGO's inability to keep details private, even from MSD."

The Report also notes: "Such an outcome would not only have an adverse affect on the individuals concerned and NGOs, but would not serve the public interest. Unfunded or deterred (potential) service users would not feature in data being used to inform government policy. They would effectively become invisible."

NZAC's core principles echo the Privacy Commissioner's points. NZAC representative Rhonda Pritchard says, "when clients come for help from counselling, whether as individuals or in a group, it's because they are experiencing stress or distress in their lives that is very difficult to share with others in their everyday lives. It is because this help is offered in a private situation that they are willing to come at all."

"Clients are willing to engage with a particular person they trust and the thought of their personal information being shared with a government institution would likely be the very condition that would keep them away. The privacy of the relationship provides the containment that supports the motivation for change.

"To require clients to consent to their individualised information being collected by MSD in order to receive help constitutes coercion, and is a breach of the NZAC Code of Ethics which counsellors who are members must observe."

Convenor of the Ethics Committee of NZAC, Sue Webb says, "Clients cannot give fully 'informed consent' when they do not know the exact purpose of their record, especially with their name and other identifying information, being collected or and do not know how their data will be used."

Representing the Maori Roopu of NZAC, Te Aranga Hakiwai says, "NZAC upholds the right of people to have the right to give informed consent to personal data capture. I see inherent risks in translating data to population demographics as it could form the basis for the stigmatisation and moral opprobrium towards those people(s) most likely to access assistance."



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## More in-school support is needed to deal with rape culture

Nationwide action is needed in New Zealand schools to prevent one in three girls before age 16 experiencing sexual assault, and avoid one in seven boys being sexually abused by adulthood.

The NZ Association of Counsellors (NZAC) called for nationwide access to relationship initiatives such as the Accident Compensation Corporation's (ACC) [Mates and Dates programme](#) in all NZ high schools.

"We have a real youth problem in this country with a rape culture," said NZAC spokesperson and school guidance counsellor, Sarah Maindonald.

Her comments follow last month's Wellington College investigation into remarks published on social media by a group of students that were derogatory to women.

Sarah says NZ's rape culture in schools could have been addressed if the 2013 Education Review Office (ERO) review of in-school guidance and pastoral care recommendations had been followed.

The review found that Kiwi youth from 49 secondary schools were desperate to have trusted adults to talk to and appropriate guidance programmes.

Guidance counsellors were named as the number one choice for students to talk to about sexual issues, family violence, peer and family relationships, and drugs and alcohol.

"Counsellors support the ERO report and urge the government to resource those recommendations and return to tagged funding of one counsellor to 400 students."

The current ratio at several large boys' schools in Wellington and Manawatu is about one counsellor to between 1400 and 1600 students, she says.

Guidance counsellors regularly run guidance programmes and work alongside health teachers in the provision of programmes in sensitive areas.

Sarah says this is a positive preventative measure right under the government's nose.

"You can roll out programmes, but you need specialist teachers such as school guidance counsellors to deliver them and deal with some of the difficult issues and conversations which arise from this kind of education."



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## The International Counselling Conference, a first for NZAC

Advocating for New Zealand's disempowered is a key NZ Association of Counsellors (NZAC) philosophy, but so too is having a presence on the international counselling stage.

NZAC Te Ahi Kaa Gay Puketapu-Andrews and Ethics Committee Convenor Sue Webb are attending this year's International Counselling Conference.

Hosted by the International Association For Counselling and the Argentine Association for Counselling, the annual event will take place in the capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires.

Hosted over four days between April 20-23, the conference will feature a multitude of international counselling leaders and presenters, and include workshops and roundtable discussions.

This year's theme, Active Counselling for Social Development, was chosen as a response to the unprecedented strain that Argentinians, and the international population, face in 2017.

For Gay, and the Association, it is an incredible networking opportunity.

"The NZAC Executive confirmed the Association's attendance to further cement our presence in the international counselling community.

"As part of that global community of counsellors, counsellor educators, students, and researchers everyone will play a part in developing the profession through this event."

Gay has attended previously on numerous occasions, before the Association became a member of the International Association for Counselling (IAC).

However, since the acceptance of NZAC's membership to the IAC, Gay will represent the Association officially for the first time.

She is looking forward to the event's *Associations' Round-Table* on April 20, formerly known as the *Presidents' Round-Table*, where she will meet with representatives of other associations to discuss and advance mutual counselling aims.

Sue will present a keynote speech on April 20 titled, Being a Pakeha Counsellor: Post-colonialism, social justice and sustainability in Aotearoa New Zealand.

She will provide a Pakeha perspective on how the NZ counselling profession is grappling with the country's colonial history, its moves towards bi-culturalism, associated dilemmas around multi-culturalism, present social justice concerns, and growing focus on sustainability.



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## **What is mindfulness and how can it help people retrain their brain to reduce stress? NZAC member Shirley Pastiroff shares the benefits of why she practices what she preaches.**

Specialising in mindfulness-based counselling and mindful parenting solutions, Shirley has become a household name in East Auckland.

She runs courses for busy parents that deliver effective ways to reducing stress, because with five children of her own, she empathises with her clients.

“Understanding their own brain chemistry helps people heal because in my experience, my clients experience as much benefit from empowerment and knowing the simple research and science of stress, as they do from being listened to about their stress.

“Their lives begin to make sense at a physiological, chemical level and they began to have kindness for themselves. It may be a part of their psyche, but I use it now with every single client and without fail the ‘Aha’ moments come faster.”

Using the mindfulness-based counselling and coaching service’s, Renew Your Mind, particular take on the mindfulness model, the brain can be categorised into three colours that correspond with an emotional state.

Shirley says the key to mindfulness is knowing which one you are in and how to change it.

Red-brain induces the same physiological components in the body that you might experience in a life-threatening situation.

“You see a child on the road and you begin to fear for their safety; your body goes into ‘flight or fight’ mode and releases cortisol and your hunger dissipates because you’re expecting the worst.

“When that child is out of harm’s way, the body begins to calm down; the immune system comes back online.”

But this sense of emergency can be induced at work when multiple emails need replying; when the children do not behave at the supermarket; or you have an argument with your partner.

“Your brain kicks your body into that same ‘space’ you were in with that child rescue scenario.”

For those who are more susceptible to stress, this can be exhausting, not just physically but mentally and emotionally too.

Orange-brain is a state of working towards a future goal, or ticking tasks off on a checklist; get the kids out of bed, feed and clothe them, get them out the door and into the car before 8.30am.

Whereas green-brain is the mindfulness state, and Shirley says that is when we work at our best.

It is the difference between reacting in a situation to becoming aware of your thoughts before you react, she says.

Learning about simple coping mechanisms like breathing and identifying emotions help people find ways to reduce those emotions when they are triggered.

“There is now so much evidence that being able to shift our brain from a state of unsafety to safety, is at the heart of good mental health.

“That may be safety in a relationship to our partner, our children, our past, our future, our traumas but the underlying key shift is the same and is at the heart of good mental wellbeing.

“Practicing red-brain, green-brain, I was able to change my reaction activity levels so I wasn’t reacting to the children’s behaviour. In many ways, their behaviour hasn’t changed, but our house is a very different environment.”