

## Press Release

24 May 2018

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### Mental health inquiry public meeting

A cold, stormy night was no deterrent for concerned local people from across the Wairarapa region to turn out to the regional Meet the Panel Forum on Tuesday evening.

About half of the audience chose to speak, with several recounting their own or whānau's experience with mental health and addiction issues. Obvious pain and emotion prevailed, but with it a sense of empathy and aroha and a strong desire to share ideas and solutions and look to the future.

Following the opening karakia by Kaumatua, Mike Kawana, panel members Ron Paterson (Chair), Dean Rangihuna, Jemaima Tiatia-Seath and Josiah Tualamali'i introduced themselves and proceedings were open to the floor.

Suicide – its impact, causes and prevention – dominated the discussion; highlighting the importance of the issue in the region. Those present at the meeting expressed their personal perspectives with a common theme being a call for improved "wrap-around services" and better coordination between sectors and agencies. Resilience building, the need for a different balance between counselling and medication, and consistency of services were all canvassed. A few attendees alluded to the value of creative endeavour and the success of the King Street Artworks programme contributing to supporting individuals and groups across the region, including those with mental health challenges.

Local police talked about their experience and their desire to contribute to a more cohesive delivery of mental health services in the Wairarapa.

Amongst the sadness of the personal stories told, the kaupapa brought to light a positive, constructive dialogue with a desire for solutions to address things perceived not to have been right in the past.

As a couple of participants said upon leaving, "We feel better and stronger for having come along tonight." And speaking for the panel Ron Paterson, Chair was encouraged by the sharing of ideas and hope for the future.

*Submissions can be made until 5 June. There are several ways to submit. Check out how <https://www.mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/contact-us/opportunities-to-connect/>*

*Meet the Panel forums are being held around the country until early July. Check out the Inquiry website <https://www.mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/contact-us/opportunities-to-connect/>. The forums are open to everyone and to ensure attendees feel safe to share their views people are asked*

*not to film, record or recount any aspects of the meeting that might identify individuals or their personal situations.*

**For more information:**

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