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BULLETINS

Gratitude for six good years: On the privilege of leading a professional health organisation



Michelle te Kira

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Worry about general practice funding keeps managers and administrators awake at night [Image: Kinga Howard on Unsplash]

Michelle Te Kira writes about passion, crisis and advocacy in this, her final column in her capacity as chair of PMAANZ

This will be my last article for the Practice Managers and Administrators Association of New Zealand, which I have proudly represented for the past six years.

When I first came onto the executive, very naive, wide-eyed and full of ideas, I was told by a great friend that it would only be one year, “matey”, only to find out after I had accepted the position in front of the annual general meeting that it was in fact three years!

Six years on, I am truly grateful for the opportunities and the amazing people I have had the pleasure of working alongside. I feel privileged to have represented an innovative, passionate membership that makes our organisation what it is today.

The PMAANZ annual conference in Ōtautahi Christchurch was held a few weeks ago. Nearly 300 managers, administrators and receptionists, representing general practice, allied, rural, hauora Māori, Pacific and rural practices, were in attendance.

This event is a standalone event separate from other health sector organisations and is solely focused on practice managers' education, connection and networking. Thank you to all our sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, attendees and supporters. It was a huge success and we are truly grateful. See you all in Tāmaki Makaurau for the PMAANZ 2024 conference.

The theme of the conference this year was operational transition, from reactive to proactive. On reflection, this theme is timely amid the health reforms and finally being able to breathe after the pandemic.

The main korero/feelings among the attendees can be summed up as “We need solutions now!” We need funding that is fit for purpose, we need investment from the Government in general practice – otherwise general practice will not be able to provide essential services or, in some places, even exist.

Managers and administrators' worries

The Band-Aids we keep getting are just not enough, they are token gestures

Conference breakout sessions were grouped according to practice size – small, medium and large – as well as allied health and rural. During these sessions, attendees were asked “What keeps you awake at night?”

The answers were no surprise across all sessions: funding!

pay parity and equity

staff shortages

debt

rising costs

doctors nearing retirement

corporate domination

quickly losing the owner/doctor model of practice

ownership

compliance and time

staff relationships and behaviour

workload and burnout, and

data integration and IT.

Robust conversations were had but the common theme was, we are in crisis. We cannot keep waiting for things to happen. The Band-Aids we keep getting are just not enough, they are token gestures.

General practice teams have proven we have the solutions, but we need more ground-level experienced people involved in decision-making rather than the same-old handpicked people.

More collaboration is happening and that is essential for creating an accessible, affordable, healthcare system that works for our whānau and communities.

The healthcare system needs to address inequities for all, have the appropriate funding and appropriate service delivery models, and be supported by a workforce that meets and fits the needs of the communities we serve.

If we don't get these right, general practices will cut more services, continue to lose experienced staff and, scarily, may not exist in the very near future.

We need action NOW, and the PMAANZ executive is working hard to continually engage and collaborate with other national health organisations and exercise our voice.

For pae ora, healthy futures strategies to work well, we all need to work in partnership and shout as loud as we can from the bottom up.

I hope I have shouted loudly enough for the past four years, and I will continue to advocate for our members as a proud PMAANZ member.

It has again been a privilege to be chair and represent PMAANZ and our membership. Thank you to all who have helped me along the way; you know who you are.

So now I hand over the reins to the very experienced Mary Ford, the new chair of PMAANZ.

Nga mihi kia koe

Michelle Te Kira is the immediate past chair of the Practice Managers and Administrators Association of New Zealand

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