

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH INVESTIGATION INTO WAIKATO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INVESTIGATION GETS OFF TO A TRULY BIZARRE START

*By Jane Stevens & Anne Ramsay 6/8/15*

“If I hadn't been there myself I wouldn't have believed it, said Anne Ramsay, Manager of the Ngaruawahia Community House.

A couple of days ago I was sent a panui for a meeting at Pathways Hamilton (a part of the WISE empire) for people to give feedback to the Ministry of Health about community mental health services.

“Great,” I thought, I think I have some valuable insights to offer. So along I went with my colleague Anne Ramsay.

As well as a whānau perspective to offer, we both work with lots of people in our community who access mental health services and were keen to see a consultation meeting organised for our community as well.

However, when we arrived at the meeting at the Pathways/WISE premises, we were treated like a pair of would-be terrorists.

We were questioned, refused entry to the meeting and guarded in the foyer of Kakariki House as though we were there to plant a bomb. The staff we encountered were as edgy as I've ever seen anyone - you could cut the air with a knife.

We were made to wait (under constant guard) until the Ministry of Health officials arrived (KGB, MI5, SIS take some lessons!!!).

Eventually, and very late for their meeting, two MoH officials arrived, Chloe Fergusson-Tibble, and an unnamed colleague. They became flustered and very ill at ease when informed by Pathways staff about our presence.

Their response was to retreat from the building and phone their Ministry of Health boss, Director of Mental Health John Crawshaw, spending a good 10 minutes taking turns to speak to him. I'm not sure if they realised we could all see the visuals of their conversation which included a lot of hand gesturing and head shaking!

The upshot was a refusal to allow us to attend the meeting - which had gone from being an open meeting yesterday, to today being only for Pathways clients.

As a concession Fergusson-Tibble offered to meet us after the meeting, which, as it turned out, was a 10 minute on the street talk, with her

telling me she wanted to hear from whānau but at the same time telling us to keep my comments general and not focus on family circumstances circumstances.

She refused to even discuss her brief for consultation, give us any overview or tell us how people got an opportunity to engage.

We left feeling totally shell-shocked at the treatment we had received from both the MoH and WISE/Pathways.

What we did learn was that this 'consultation' was part of the Ministerial 'Inspection' of Mental Health Services in the Waikato.

What we actually saw was carefully orchestrated; a few chosen clients of a Govt-contract dependent service wheeled in for a closed-meeting inside the service providers home base.

In no way did this constitute an open consultation process in our minds, so we have little expectation that Fergusson-Tibble and Crawshaw will agree to our request for a public consultation in Ngaruawahia where we work, or anywhere in the Waikato where they are supposedly "inspecting" mental health services.