

# Summary of PSA Members' Response to Te Mauri o Rongo

The PSA surveyed our members working at Te Whatu Ora and in community organisations working in health. We asked four questions of our members this discussion document:

- Why is the charter important to you?
- What part of the charter do you think will make the most difference to you?
- What do you think is missing from the charter?
- What needs to happen in your workplace to make the charter a reality?

We received 370 responses across both Te Whatu Ora and community organisations, representing the range of occupations of our members.

This summary starts with two key themes: our members commitment to Pae Ora and care and the impact of the current environment on the way the charter is received. Then it moves to discuss the questions. One member, a Te Whatu Ora Kaumatua, answered the last three questions in Te Reo, and his comments have been used to frame the last three sections. Some selected quotes are attached in an Appendix.

The response to Te Mauri o Rongo is an act of generosity by our members. Working in the health system has been increasingly taxing in recent years. Members have been working under incredibly difficult conditions and are facing another difficult winter. Our members' responses often show the stressful working conditions they are currently working in and also show their belief that a better health system is possible and necessary, both for those who work in it and for everyone who uses it.

## Commitment to pae ora and care

Throughout their responses, our members linked the charter to their commitment to their work, their commitment to caring for people and their ability to contribute to pae ora. Our members emphasised the links between their working conditions and their ability to provide the care people need and deserve. One member said that the charter was important, because it could effect every aspect of work culture in Te Whatu Ora, which would in turn improve clients experiences. Members

also explained that inability to give good care, because of poor working conditions such as understaffing, further added to the stress of their work:

The 'moral injury' for workers in community settings being unable to meet the needs of patients and whanau because of caseload pressures and waitlists, pressure to discharge, having to hold back on really establishing relationships and not being able to work to the full scope of your practice and only do the urgent stuff is heartbreaking and ultimately leads to burnout – Occupational Therapist, Te Whatu Ora.

Our members and their families are users of the health system and saw the importance of the charter both for them as workers and for the health services they desired for their community:

I believe that if we do not have a strong, functioning and collegial health system, we will not be able to have a safe and healthy country. It starts with us. – Admin, Te Whatu Ora

## Impact of current working conditions

While the majority of the members responded positively to the charter and most of this discussion will focus on their support for the charter, there was an important minority who expressed skepticism. When asked why the charter is important, some members replied that it wasn't.

It won't. There is no provision to call the providers to account. It's just weasel words. Te Whatu Ora won't be able to afford to implement this so it will be swept under the carpet and another box ticked. – Support Worker, community sector.

Members who expressed scepticism of the charter were not rejecting its vision, or the need to change. Instead, their experience in the health system made them and the conditions that they were working under meant that words on a paper did not connect with them. One member said that they could not comment, because they had not had time to read the charter. Those workers still want a better workplace and the sort of workplace the charter described, but it will take more than words to persuade them such a change is possible.

It is hard to imagine how this charter can truly be made a reality. I agree with everything that is written in it, and I believe that it is being produced with a genuine intention to follow through, but making these ideas a reality across our large, complex, underfunded organisations is a massive challenge! – Speech Language Therapist, Te Whatu Ora.

## Why the Charter is important to our members

Our members responded to this question in two ways. Some outlined what they wanted their work to look like and the contribution the charter could play to building a better health system:

I am a community support worker, that have the rights to receive the Wairuatanga, Rangatiratanga and Whanaugatanga – Community Support Worker, Community Sector

Our members wanted to feel valued and to have a voice in the health system and if the charter was realised they would have both. One member said the charter was important because:

It values my work regardless of if I am at the top job or at the low paid job. - What is important for me that my contribution to the health system is valued – Te Whatu Ora, Pharmacy Assistant.

In discussing why the charter was important members referenced other workers, family members who worked in the health system, or workers who were starting their careers.

Other members focused on their current work experiences and the urgency of changing and addressing problems in the health system. For these members, the positive expressions in the charter resonated with what they wanted to change in their current workplace. Many members described feeling unsafe at work, primarily because of understaffing and because of bullying.

I would like to see a change in how the current workforce are appreciated and respected. Due to ongoing staff shortages we are being made to provide care for our young people in conditions where we are over worked and having to make some difficult decisions, but putting ourselves under pressure, we put ourselves at risk of practising unsafely. Burnout is high at the moment. – Mental Health Nurse, Te Whatu Ora.

## What part of the charter do you think will make the most difference to our members?

The tides are changing. Kei te tini haere nga tai inaianei, mai i te Taitimu, Taipari, Taiweriweri, Taiture, Taiope, Tairoa huriraunga ki te Tainui – Kaumatua, Te Whatu Ora.

A significant number of members said that the whole document was important and emphasised that all changes needed to take place. Others made reference to specific pou and how that pou would improve their work. Wairuatanga was mentioned most often:

Wairuatanga - If your wairua and hinengaro (mind) is in a good place at work then all the other principles will fall in place. – Radiology, Te Whatu Ora.

Members also mentioned the importance of the collective behaviours and the collective sense of purpose.

As with the previous section, members also frequently mentioned current difficulties in their workplace that they believed that the charter could change. A safe workplace, particularly safe staffing levels and a commitment to end bullying were most often mentioned. Members also spoke of the importance of being valued and listened to.

I like the way it is constructed and broken down into organisational, collective and individual. The part that interests me most is the workplace being involved in decision-making. Obviously this has to be practical, but at present I don't feel as though what I say counts for anything. My view from where I am is hierarchical with me at the bottom. – Clinical Coder, Te Whatu Ora.

## What our members think is missing from the charter

E orite nga moemoea me nga korero, e pa ana ki ia atua. – Kaumatua, Te Whatu Ora.

In response to this question, our members emphasised the need for accountability mechanisms for the charter itself. This shows how much our members valued the charter – that their primary concern was ensuring that it contained the mechanisms that would ensure it was realised.

I think the charter is missing mechanisms for accountability for employers. When employers act in ways which break their obligations under the charter, how are employees meant to hold them to account? What power is actually being instilled within employees to ensure that these values are being adhered to? And who is reporting on progress towards these goals? If it is the employers themselves, then is there not a significant conflict of interest occurring? How can employees ensure that we are not the only ones who can be held to account within the system, when there is no mechanism to redistribute power into the hands of employees? Supporter Worker, Community Organisation.

Our members concerns should be taken seriously, the more explicit the charter is about mechanisms for its own enforcement the stronger it will be and the more faith members will have that it is more than words on a bit of paper.

## What needs to happen in your workplace to make the charter a reality?

Me pono me tika te whakatakoto enei momo korero. Ma te wa, akuanei pea ka whai kiko. – Kaumatua, Te Whatu Ora.

Many of the responses emphasised how far their current work conditions were, from the commitments set out in the charter. For one worker:

I am one of the many unseen and unheard Healthcare members out there quietly working away in people's homes, working alone and with little to no support, encouragement or feedback. I don't feel like my workplace cares about me, I am fairly certain they barely know I exist. I love everything about my job aside from trying to communicate with the agency that I work for. And I say 'try' because it is a genuinely difficult task. Because I deserve to be recognized for the work that I do. Work that takes a huge toll. – Community Support Worker, Community Organisation.

The answers to this question, emphasised the existing difficulties workers face and the impossibility of realising the four pou in workplaces with unsafe staffing and where bullying is acceptable.

Leadership was the most common answer members gave to this question. They believe that the leadership practice and culture in Te Whatu Ora will need to change. Many members mentioned the importance of literally and metaphorically spending time in workers shoes to understand the challenges they faced. Others focused on the importance of listening.

Managers and administrators need to show respect for the workers listen to us, understand our difficulties, walk a mile in our shoes, genuinely show some heart and care. Stop fobbing us off with empty talk and idle promises, stop the bullying atmosphere. It starts with respect and talking, then changing things in a timely fashion. – Support Worker, Community Organisation.

Some workers answered this question by praising their current team and the work they had done to build good values:

My work group already tries to work with integrity and kindness. We support each other well and treat each other and people we come in to contact with, respectfully and with dignity. – Admin, Te Whatu Ora

Those who did speak of their current working life reflecting the values of the charter emphasised that this was the result of conscious effort by their team.

Other members spoke of the importance of the opportunity to build collective relationships within the workplace to ensure the charter was made real:

More incentives including prioritisation of wellbeing and opportunities for staff to connect with one another. - Providing opportunities for the workers to identify areas of work that need to be addressed and allowing workers to be part of the problem-solving process would also help with building a positive workplace environment. – Clinical Administrator, Te Whatu Ora

Most members responded to this question by identifying what they thought needed to change. Others gave procedural answers – explained what process they thought would help make the charter real. Those answered dovetailed with those who talked about how things were currently working and talked about the importance of collective relationships:

Meetings and opportunities to discuss how this will be actively implemented into the work place. - A clear guideline with clear time lines on how this will be implemented - Opportunities for safe to voice how they see this being implemented and how they incision the charter to work. – Occupational Therapist, Te Whatu Ora

# Appendix: Selected quotes from members

PSA members in the health and community services shared some feedback through a survey which was open from 20-26/07/2023. Below are a selection of quotes from members to the question 'Why is the charter important to you?'

## Māori and the charter

Te Mauri o Rongo is important to me as it is HOME GROWN in Aotearoa. Clear & concise document with comprehensible values, principals and behaviours that health entities are EXPECTED to demonstrate. A refreshing contract that holds each and every provider, health and care worker accountable to each other, & to the communities they serve, with the purpose of continual progress improvements within achievable 5yrly timeframes. strengthened with the identification and constant invoking of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principals. - to build a better work culture in healthcare.

Protects Me as a Maori staff member

Because it encompasses the core values of addressing E aha te mea nui o te ao 'He Tangata He Tangata He Tangata'

To give Maori and all workers a fair equitable chance in the Health field . I agree with the Principles of the Charter to Guide all; in that way leading into a more equitable workplace and community

Being Maori, not all work places treat you with respect, see you as an equal or tautoko you in your mahi when needed. I feel this kaupapa will help lessen the gap.

To Preserves the essential rights people enjoy

The charter is important because it outlines the ideal ethos behind the practice of providing health care as a service to the patient and their whanau as well as the community they live in. It humanises healthcare and emphasises the individual's and organisation's role in doing that. It also encompasses Te Tiriti being the guiding document behind the ethos of the charter.

## Voice and empowerment

The Charter is very important to me as the only way to improve working relationships and attitudes across all sections of the health sector. I applaud the Charter completely and totally.

Spells out a collective approach to health across all domains

To have a voice

To give voice to the workers and a sense of empowerment.

It speaks of workers are to be meaningfully involved in decision making. This has been lacking completely at my workplace, all decisions are from the top down, and consultation is a tick-box exercise.

As a means to instill power within workers in order to ensure that the systemic issues, which plague the healthcare sector, are addressed promptly and with respect to workers and their experiences. The charter offers an opportunity for workers to hold the organizations that employ them to account for the gross mismanagement and lack of concern for health and safety as well as mental, cultural and spiritual well-being.

It describes behaviours I can expect from my employer. - It should ensure fair treatment for all workers. - It will make me feel safe to escalate any behaviours that are not in line with the charter. - It encourages having te Tiriti as a baseline.

## Feeling valued

Everyone Matters

I am a community support worker, that have the rights to receive the Wairuatanga, Rangatiratanga and Whanaugatanga, from the disability sector.

So those in health care can see that we are valued and important. That there is something we can refer and aspire to be. Having a charter will inevitably guide those new workers into an industry that cares for their employees.

Recognition

To notice how hard we work in helping our clients with everyday issues in their Homes

I need assurance that I am valued, supported & well trained in the work I do. I believe that the charter can ensure this takes place effectively.

Looks after us as workers

Everyone deserves to be supported and to feel valued

Because I am one of the many unseen and unheard Healthcare members out there quietly working away in people's homes, working alone and with little to no support, encouragement or feedback.

- Because I don't feel like my workplace cares about me, I am fairly certain they barely know I exist.

- Because I love everything about my job aside from trying to communicate with the agency that I work for. And I say 'try' because it is a genuinely difficult task.

- Because I am sent into dangerous/risky situations (For myself or clients) despite having told my employer, and very rarely is protocol followed by them. They're too busy, too



stressed, too distracted or there are too many hoops to jump through and my voice just gets lost among hundreds in similar situations.

- Because I deserve to be recognized for the work that I do. Work that takes a huge toll. I care for and I support people as they die. I guide and reassure people as their dementia worsens. I befriend people, and then I never hear from them again. I listen to fears, I hear their pain and problems, I sit with them in some of their most vulnerable moments. I help give them the courage to stand up and try again. I visit these people multiple times per week for years, and then they're removed from my roster without any communication from my workplace, never to hear from them again.

#### VALUE AND SUPPORT

It values my work regardless of if I am at the top job or at the low paid job. - What is important for me that my contribution to the health system is valued

#### TO VALUE EVERYONE

Wellbeing in the workplace is important to me, it lays the foundation for good work and service delivery.

To value and support workers

I have and am currently being bullied at my workplace and have been discriminated against. This has been brought up to my manager but nothing has been done, and my bullies have been glorified. Based on what I have been through and am still going through, I think this charter is a great development for workplaces to advocate for staff facing similar situations.

The charter is important so will help to acquire equality in the workforce; eliminate bullying and discrimination.

For a physical, emotional and mentally safe working environment

#### Diversity

It will create an environment where the worker is treated fairly, with respect and dignity. That the workplace is safe physically, culturally and mentally. And a workplace free of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Respect and acceptance of the different cultures that are represented across the organisation.

It is important that we all work together inclusively and cater for each others needs, be respectful, understanding of all cultures, beliefs etc. We will then be able to cater for the people in our care if we take the time to respect and understand the needs of all people.

We are a growing nation of many cultures and many different nationalities and we all deserve to be treated the same, regardless of creed, colour, race or culture!

It would be an excellent values charter for the nation.

As stated the Health Charter commits to addressing culture, common values, principles, and behaviours that guide people working within NZ health care. This is important to me as a Pacific who has a responsibility not only to my job as a New grad, but also to my

whanau and as a student, I have experienced situations where I have had to neglect whanau matters and my values to focus on my studies or complete task at work. The charter has the potential to change this and open the mindset of others perspective.

So we can work in a safe workplace and take care of our one . elders Respect our elders we have not many left now look after them listen to their concerns short working week for them.

Not only to me at the end of my working life but to younger people

### Shared expectations

I believe that if we do not have a strong, functioning and collegial health system, we will not be able to have a safe and healthy country. It starts with us.

Clearly sets out expectations of all

So we can work in an environment to better a workplace with colleagues and patients and go home feeling great about our day, re-energise and do it all again the next days to come.

A common set of shared values across a large and diverse organisation serves as a unifying principle everyone can align with. It also serves as a touch stone for behavioral expectations.

Great to have a direction for Management & staff to follow and ensure all on the same page

It lays out the best practice for employers and employees and sets fair and reasonable expectations across the board for everyone to work with dignity.

Ensures a shared understanding of ways of working and interacting with one another.

Defines a good workplace

It outlines shared expectations and holds the organisation accountable to ensure staff are being treated equitably and resources are being used in a transparent and reasonable way

It is important to describe what this organisation and those in it should aspire to and what the organisation should be held accountable for.