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Kia ora and welcome to the second New Zealand Primary Health Care Awards | He Tohu Mauri Ora

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa
Ko Kaimataua te māunga
Ko Waimakariri te awa
Kei Ōtautahi taku kainga tuturu
Kei Tamaki Makaurau taku kainga inaienei
Ko Fountaina te whanau
Ko Barbara taku ingoa
Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou
Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa

Kia ora and welcome to the second New Zealand Primary Health Care Awards | He Tohu Mauri Ora.

My name is Barbara Fountain and I am managing editor of your co-host The Health Media and editor of New Zealand Doctor Rata Aotearoa.

On behalf The Health Media and the Pharmacy Guild, I give a heartfelt welcome to health minister Andrew Little and his caucus colleague Aupito William Sio. And to Dame Tariana Turia and Rotorua mayor Steve Chadwick.

A big welcome back also to associate health minister Peeni Henare – like many of us you will be pleased we've moved on from the tropical theme of last year and have working air conditioning.

A special thanks and welcome to John Robson from ACC, our premium sponsor.

To all our sponsors, thank you for supporting excellence in primary care with your time and your money. Please everyone take note of these champions for primary care – their logos are all around you.

Welcome to our judges, our finalists and our friends.

Welcome everyone – you’re looking fabulous.

Some of you were here for our first foray in February last year.

What a difference a year makes. On that day, one case of COVID 19 had just been confirmed in New Zealand; three weeks later the country went into lockdown.

Last year, I explained why my business partner Anna Mickell and I believed it was worth taking the leap and creating an awards event that recognised collaboration, excellence and innovation across the primary care sector.

In part, that was because most of you are far too shy about your achievements, but we also hoped the awards might contribute to pulling our system together, helping those employed in DHBs and government to understand that private primary care providers are not something to be endured but a vital part of the system we have.

Any arguments I might have put forward were trumped in the following weeks by the real-life response from the primary care sector to the pandemic.

A response that saw pharmacies keeping their doors open on empty streets, general practices pivot to online consultations, Māori and Pacific providers setting up swabbing stations and elderly protected in their resthomes.

We know from the stories of the finalists who are here tonight, that through care and kindness, they helped their patients through lockdown and beyond.

Primary care took action to pre-empt any devastating impact on secondary care services.

In many ways, the coronavirus is an easier challenge to confront than the next one coming our way. The restructuring of the health system.

A virus can be sneaky, unpredictable and with unintended consequences

A reform can be sneaky, unpredictable and with unintended consequences

The former we can vaccinate against, the latter not so easily.

Minister Little and the government have a vision.

It would do the public and the government a disservice if we did not all interrogate that vision and hold to account those charged with implementing it. At The Health Media, that is our job.

Policy documents paint a picture of systems that often appear inanimate, while we know systems are people.

Behind the words “ditching DHBs” and “ending PHOs” are people who, for the most part, have strived to make a positive impact on people’s lives in a system which we all agree is no longer fit for purpose.

The changes propose a new Māori Health Authority with power in decision-making at all levels and further development of Māori Iwi Partnership Boards.

Again we are talking about people, Māori providers, iwi members, Te Tiriti claimants, patients and their whānau and communities, for whom this has been a long road travelled and who now face huge expectations to carry change that will benefit us all.

Translating the policy on paper to changes in people's lives is going to be hard if this reform is going to achieve more than the last three.

I have the advantage of years of observation to see the system's good points and its failings and, in that light, I feel comfortable with the need for change.

I am a middle-class Pākēha who understands privilege comes at others' expense – that is what privilege is.

I am not steeped in te ao Māori, yet I hold hope that the proposed changes if implemented will help heal something beyond our health system; that a recognition of Te Tiriti in these changes will flow further in our communities.

These reforms aim high and move into uncharted waters.

They need to be fairly resourced. That means funding.

It also means when stuff just can't or won't work, there needs to be honesty, because the risk of these reforms is being shared widely, right down to local communities, trusts and businesses.

And it is also important to remember health services contribute only 20 per cent to our health and wellbeing – they can't solve everything.

I'm a newspaper editor, I'm not naive.

I try not to be cynical, but scepticism is healthy. I'm trusting, but it's not blind trust.

It's a big leap from policy on a page to daily practice. And there is a lot of politics in between.

Those of you who are finalists tonight have shown yourselves open to working differently, to being innovative as you seek to improve health outcomes for your patients and achieve equity for Māori, to trust yourselves to do better.

Along with your friends, colleagues and family members here tonight, I salute you for your courage.

And tonight we all say, celebrate! Have a great night and enjoy your success.

Whakarongo! Whakarongo! Whakarongo!

Ki te tangi a te tui

"Tui, tui, tuituia!"

Tui-a i runga

Tui-a i raro

Tui-a i roto
Tui-a i waho
Listen, listen, listen
to the cry of the tui – stitching, stitching together
Stitching from above
From below
From within
From without

I now welcome to the stage the minister of many parts, including health, the honorable
Andrew Little

Ngā mihi nui,

Barbara Fountain, managing editor, The Health Media Ltd

