Unless we are making progress in our nursing every year, every month, every week.- Take my word for it – we are going back. – Florence Nightingale

It is with a lot of pride that I submit this report for 2015. There is certain anxiety with the old adage’ pride go-eth before a fall’ however the pride sits with the achievements of Te Ao Māramatanga. NZ College of Mental Health Nurses.

I would like to start with acknowledging the Board members, we have been getting used to a new way of governing and this is done with enormous amounts of goodwill, positivity, generosity of spirit and professionalism. Each and every Board member has conducted themselves with dignity and commitment to improving outcomes for nursing. We are farewelling two fully committed Board Members this year – Mel Green and David Warrington. Both originate from Southland, both are amazing people and each have held positions on the Board. Mel has been Vice President and Treasurer, a stalwart and steady Board member no matter we have asked of her. David has kept us on the straight and clear pathway at all times, he provides sense checking and a voice of rationality and reason. He has been Secretary and we will miss them both.

The College Board are ably supported by two paid members of staff- the College Manager Valerie Williams, whose responsibilities have morphed and changed and who we find amazingly adaptable and highly capable. The administrative guru who we would struggle to manage without is Sue Platts who ensures all our bills are paid, and all the details are completed in a timely manner, thank you to you both.
NZ College is divided into Branches- some more active than others however we must remember the College is the Membership. Thank you to each and every one of you who chose to be a member. Thank you to all who put in the time behind the scenes to support branch activity. We cannot and would not be here without you.

Rather than give a month by month account of activity – I want to showcase some, but not all, of the highlights so you can appreciate the National coverage that is achieved.

- Nelson Marlborough Branch held a successful Professional Development Day showcasing many initiatives. I attended this, it was inspirational, educational and was everything that represents excellence in mental health nursing.

- The Waikato Branch reports active College activity in the form of nursing forum activity. To achieve this the branch utilises both college members and external presenters for 1 hour presentations, some of which are open to our Allied health colleagues. Recent topics presented by branch members have included: Nursing diagnosis and plans of care, Parents with mental health disorders: consequences for children, and Clinical relevance and utility of Outcome measures for nurses. A moving and thoughtful reflection on ‘why should nurses join Te Ao Māramatanga was penned by a long serving member and Fellow – Brent Doncliff – some of his korero is as follows “What are the compelling reasons for belonging to the NZCMHN?”

This is the only national organisation in NZ which solely advocates for the professional interests of mental health nurses – and only mental health nurses. This is important because, despite much effort, mental health nursing still remains the ‘Cinderella’ of the nursing world! Unless we work together to promote those things which are important to mental health nurses as a professional group – nobody else will!!! Things like targeted training funding for mental health nursing post-graduate courses (NESP) was just one of the issues which the NZCMHN lobbied strongly in favour of establishing.”

The College has worked with the National Directors of Mental Health Nurses group to create a position paper about Engagement and Observation. There has long been debates about the merits and perils of having people at risk of suicide on ‘10 or 15 minute observations or even constant observations’. We didn’t debate that people who need acute end high levels of support need adequate observation, however what the literature and our ‘gut’ tells us, is that it is the engagement that underpins observation that is the vital lifesaving measure. The position paper is being launched her at conference. This has the support of the Chief Nurses Office and will require all us to ensure we follow these best principles to the very best of our ability.

- The college has provided an advice document regarding the New Entry to Specialist Practice – Mental Health and Addiction nursing to the Chief nurses office and Health Workforce New Zealand.

- The College Executive give feedback on multiple documents that come out for comment. Hopefully many members will have seen the papers asking for feedback on both the Website and Facebook pages.

- We have re-engaged and re-signed the multiple Memorandums of Understanding that we currently have with like-minded organisations and groups.
Kaiwhakahaere, Tish Siaosi and I attended the Opening of the new office for the NZ Branch of the RANZCP. The guest speaker at that event was Dr Mason Durie and we have been officially welcomed into that building.

Tish and I were also able to attend the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 40th celebration conference in October 2014. We presented the organising committee with a framed copy of ‘Taranga’ and we showed a short video of the history and kaupapa that surrounds this treasure of ours.

Credentialling activity is growing with more primary care nurses and organisations expressing interest in the process. We are currently working with a cohort of 29 primary care nurses in the wider Auckland region to support this process.

Reflecting on the leadership aspect of this role there are some immediate considerations that I would like to membership to ponder. The College is seen by significant stakeholders as THE college of mental health nurses that people will go to for policy advice, viewpoints on changes to practice, impacts on future planning of services, how to address engagement with Māori to improve outcomes, staffing skill mix advice and multiple more queries that indicate that we have much to offer as a group. However it is with some trepidation that I note our major challenges going forward.

- First and foremost we need to address the governance and direction for the Board.
- We need to build an active membership in every region.
- We need College representation on every Mental Health and Addiction Board that exists from NGO/Primary and Specialist areas.
- We need to reposition how the media is portraying nurses involved in sentinel events.
- We must support our ‘other’ nursing colleagues who are also keen to build their capability to respond to needs of people we care for and truly embrace the top of scope phenomenon.
- Our College needs to be seen by all as a Leading Organisation to promote service user focussed mental health nursing.

I would like to especially thank the Wellington Branch for taking the Conference wero and mobilising a group that have pulled off a tricky feat in todays health economy. Going forward to try to ease the burden of this, the Board will take the responsibility for Conference activity.

Thank you to members who read this, who are already active in their membership – and if every one of us, brought on ONE new member a year we would grow. One – how hard can that be?.. let’s all be proactive, be concerned for the college welfare, show interest, and above all share your knowledge of our organisation.