



**Te Ao Māramatanga
New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses (Inc.)
Partnership, Voice, Excellence in Mental Health Nursing**

Kia ora koutou

This morning Graham Roper Consumer Advisor Otago DHB MHS alerted me to comments made on the TVNZ Breakfast show this morning by the Police Assoc President (available at website) - and queried a joint press release/comment from the College, the National Association of Mental Health Consumer Advisors of whom Graham is the past chair and Fiona Howard is the present Co-Chair and RANZCP.

The end result was the following statement endorsed by the College.

Graham spearheaded this action by immediately getting on the phone and making contacts. RANZCP were not able at short notice to officially support as their Chair was on leave - they will possibly follow up with a letter.

Graham has sent the comment to the Assoc Producer at TVNZ Breakfast and will be on the programme in the morning - so if all proceeds to plan - check out the programme or look at the website later.

Thanks particularly to Tony O'Brien and Brian McKenna. It was a team effort and fits with the College role of partnership and having a voice. Luck was also involved in that we were all at our computers at the right time.

Regards

Daryle Deering

STATEMENT SENT WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL TO JAMES RANSLEY (TVNZ) BY GRAHAM ROPER

We are jointly extremely concerned about the comments made by Police Association president Greg O'Connor on the TV One Breakfast Show this morning (4th April) about the police needing to be routinely armed because of the risk of violence from people with mental illness. Such comments are stereotyping, stigmatising and discriminatory towards people who experience a mental health crisis.

Our major concerns are firstly that Mr O'Connor's comments give the wrongful impression that all violence and shootings in New Zealand involve people he described as having psychiatric or psychotic episodes.

Secondly, that his comments suggest that the only safe intervention is for the police to be armed. We note that this policy is not advocated by the new Police Commissioner.

**Te Ao Māramatanga NZCMHN®
PO Box 83 111, Edmonton Road, Auckland
admin@nzcmhn.org.nz**



**Te Ao Maramatanga
New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses (Inc.)
Partnership, Voice, Excellence in Mental Health Nursing**

Mr O'Connor did not mention the role of alcohol and violence in our society. For example, there are more than 70,000 alcohol-related physical and sexual assaults each year (Connor et al 2009) a third of all police apprehensions involve alcohol and half of violent crimes relate to alcohol (Stevenson 2009).

Providing interventions that assist people who are mentally distressed including improving communication with people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and greater collaboration with mental health services would be much more appropriate and humane than arming all members of the police force.

Supporting 'real changes' to the liquor laws in New Zealand, in order to reduce the continuing impact of the excessive availability and commercialisation of alcohol, would have a greater impact on reducing violent behaviour.

We are aware that the New Zealand police force is actively working to enhance its response to people in mental distress, and we support this endeavour. We do not consider arming the police would contribute to greater understanding between police and the community, including those who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Supported by

Daryle Deering - President
Te Ao Maramatanga, NZ College of Mental Health Nurses

Fiona Howard - co-chair
National Association Mental Health Service Consumer Advisors