



ABSTRACT FORM

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Title of the contribution/Titolo del contributo	Teaching Old Gods New Tricks		
Objectives/Obiettivi	To illustrate the role of the non government sector in New Zealand in supporting a mental health service transformation – post-deinstitutionalisation.		

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Max. 400 parole/words

New Zealand closed all of its large psychiatric hospitals during the late 1980s as it embarked upon a process of deinstitutionalization. Since the late 1990s, nearly one third of New Zealand's mental health budget goes to the non-government sector. While services have become more community based, the institutional attitudes, values, priorities and practices of a system that had dominated much of the last Century have struggled to fully complement this paradigm shift.

Growing in confidence, and drawing on its experience delivering recovery focused, community-based services, the NGO sector in New Zealand has challenged the paradigm of mental health services as solely a "delivery system" of diagnosis, treatment and care. Challenging a mechanistic structure locked into a medical model, and based in science, standardisation and regulation, the NGO sector believes such services must be about people. The closer you get to life in the community, the more important it is for services to be responsive, nimble and adaptable; to be engaged with people living lives – and sometimes struggling with lives.

Last year a Government Inquiry into mental health and addictions report drew two conclusions: 1) "New Zealand's mental health and addiction problems cannot be fixed by government alone, nor by the health system." and 2) "We can't medicate or treat our way out of the epidemic of mental distress and

addiction...”

A constant in this world is change. However our mental health systems have struggled to apply the truism that our learning, and our development must always be equal to or greater than, the rate at which the environment is changing.

This paper argues that recovery focused, peer led, trauma-informed service responses that are based upon social determinants of health and well-being, that upholds people’s human rights and respects their citizenship, and that are delivered in partnership with engaged communities, have the greatest potential to make a positive difference to people struggling with distress in their lives.

Achieving this will require not just change, but in fact a transformation. The difference is critical. A transformation will challenge prevailing “common sense”; the assumptions we take for granted, the things that “just are”. We would need to overcome what the British educationist Sir Kenneth Robinson describes as the “tyranny of common sense”.

“The most important task of today is perhaps to learn to think in a new way.”

Gregory Bateson (English anthropologist, social scientist, linguist, visual anthropologist, semiotician, and cyberneticist)