



Collective Action to Strengthen and Unify Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand

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“The health promotion sector is exploring the notion of a Collective Identity/Professional Association as a unification mechanism through which to enable purposeful action and progress (particularly in respect of workforce and other health promotion developmental aspirations and obligations).” Grant Berghan 2007.

The Story so Far

In 2007 Grant reflected that the debate has been ongoing for several years. In 2010 the discussion continues but there are indications that the Health Promotion workforce is now ready to take action and develop a professional association.

This paper builds on earlier discussion papers ‘*A Collective Identity for Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand*’ written by Helen Rance, 2006, a companion paper ‘*What does a collective identity mean from a Māori point of view?*’ written by Grant Berghan, 2007 and ‘*Collective Action to Strengthen and Unify Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand*’ A New Discussion Paper, January 2009. All papers are available on the Health Promotion Forum (HPF) web site www.hauora.co.nz and they provide a clear picture of the journey so far.

The terms “Collective Identity” and “Collective Entity” were used for a time reflecting that there was no preconceived format for the entity. The entity will be based on respect for everyone’s right to hauora, collective rights and individual perspectives. It will support and encourage ethical health promotion practice, and model and mediate understanding, respect and goodwill within the workforce, all the while grounded on collective aspirations, shared values and an agreed purpose.

In 2010 the terms ‘Collective Identity’ and ‘Collective Entity’ are replaced by ‘Professional Association’. An initial format, structure and focus for the association will be decided after further consultation by the *Working Group* and the final format will evolve over time.

As this journey has progressed, feedback from the health promotion workforce has broadly supported the concept, encouraged the development of a professional association and mandated HPF to take the lead.

In the past some feared that a professional body might exclude practitioners without appropriate qualifications but in 2010 the talk is about the need for a professional association to protect practitioners, provide mutual support and to challenge our own practice.

The Task

The task is to establish an association that will provide leadership to enhance and strengthen health promotion practice. It requires an agreed focus, shared values, knowledge and experience to support and professionally care for health promotion practitioners.

It must show respect for and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, honour Maori aspirations for self determination, control of Maori matters and accommodate different Maori realities.

A way needs to be found to support and respect a collective orientation and allow for individual realities. This association must also respect and accommodate different world views, enable meaningful participation whilst supporting the different realities of Pacific Peoples and other identifiable sectors within the health promotion workforce.

Criteria of a Profession

While some continue to debate the merits of health promotion as a process rather than a profession, several characteristics of the discipline fit with commonly accepted criteria of a profession.

A profession can be characterized by the following criteria,

- **A common body of knowledge**

The health promotion body of knowledge is described in '*Ngā Kaiakatanga Hauora mō Aotearoa - Health Promotion Competencies for Aotearoa-New Zealand*' ([the Competencies](#)).¹

- **Shared ethics or a code of practice**

The values and ethical principles underpinning health promotion Ngā Tikanga Manaki are described on page seven in the Competencies.

- **Mutual support and concern for each other**

By providing mutual support and challenging the standards and ethics of our own practice we can protect each other and in turn ensure the safety of the communities we serve.

Possible Benefits and Functions

A range of possible benefits and functions for a professional association have been identified in past discussions and papers. The functions of the association will be decided by the *Working Group* in the first instance but will evolve as the association adapts and develops.

Below is a summary of the benefits and possible functions identified to date,

- We will gain value and strength by bringing our different paradigms and perspectives together
- A system to care for and support each other (mentoring etc.)
- Offers a pathway to acknowledge our responsibility to develop the sector
- A pathway to establish agreed standards of practice and definitions of best practice
- A code of ethics to protect both practitioners and the communities we serve
- Benchmark health promotion activity and action as a guide for provider organizations
- Promotion of health promotion competencies including Māori and Pacific competencies
- Provide a clear and unified voice for health promotion, that also reflects diversity within the sector
- Certify and protect a professional title such as *Health Promotion Practitioner*

¹ The Competencies are due for review later in 2010. Information and page numbers may have changed since this paper was written.

The Risks

In the past, recognition of potential risks inherent in establishing a professional association has stymied progress; but informal feedback received during 2009 indicates that many practitioners are concerned that there are greater risks if no action is taken.

Thus moving forward the following risks need be kept in mind,

- Increasing the inequalities already in the workforce
- The process could be seen as another form of colonization
- Ownership of professional knowledge could lead to domination by the most privileged
- Professional bodies are usually led by volunteers and involve hard work to set up and maintain
- Does the health promotion workforce have the capacity?

Next Steps

HPF has initiated progress towards developing a health promotion association in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Interested organisations and individuals have been brought together and have generously agreed to participate in a Working Group.

Members of the Working Group are,

Katherine Clarke - Hutt Valley DHB, Chair

Grant Berghan - Hauora.com

Maggie McGreggor - The Heart Foundation

Trevor Simpson - Health Promotion Forum, secretariat support.

After the Working Group meets and ratifies the Terms of Reference groups, organisations and individuals who have participated in the discussions to date, together with wider health promotion and public health organisations will be invited to proffer an expression of interest in joining the Working Group. It is anticipated that the Working Group will have up to 8 members.

Trevor Simpson Senior Health Promotion Strategist, with the Maori portfolio at HPF will provide secretariat support to the Working Group.

The health promotion association will be developed 'by the workforce for the workforce' so check out the HPF website www.hauora.co.nz to view key documents, for news on developments and opportunities for your input.

By the workforce for the workforce

Appendix One *Significant Moments in the Journey so far:*

1997 The journey started at the 4th HPF conference '*Creating The Future*' where the focus was the health promotion workforce, our stories and strengthening our future. (HPF Newsletter # 42 December 1997).

2000 *Ngā Kaiakatanga Hauora mō Aotearoa, Health Promotion Competencies for Aotearoa-New Zealand* were published in May and included the first effort to identify our common values and ethics.

2002 *TUHA-NZ* was published in June 2002 a framework to operationalise Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

An '*action statement*', calling for the establishment of a professional body, was accepted by the final plenary session at the HPF conference 'Making the Connections' 2002.

2005 *A Review of the use and future of Ngā Kaiakatanga Hauora mō Aotearoa, Health Promotion Competencies for Aotearoa-New Zealand* was submitted to the Ministry of Health and the workforce. Several recommendations supported the concept of collective action to strengthen health promotion practice, ethics and training.

2006 *A Discussion Document on Draft Generic Competencies for Public Health Practitioners in Aotearoa-New Zealand* was published and widely consulted on.

Strategies to Strengthen the Health Promotion Workforce in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Seven discussion papers commissioned by the Ministry of Health explored the same topic from different perspectives. All papers supported the concept of a collective identity and several identified the HPF as "the best placed organisation from which to establish a national focal point for the health promotion workforce."

A Collective Identity for Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand, this discussion paper was consulted on at the HPF conference October 2006. Subsequently it was published in newsletters and on websites where feedback was invited.

2007 *Generic Competencies for Public Health in Aotearoa* was published in February.

What does a collective identity mean from a Maori point of view? How would the collective identity fit with a Maori worldview and the realities of Maori health promotion? Grant Berghan's companion paper to *A Collective Identity for Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand*, was published in Hauora and on the HPF website.

Public Health Workforce Development Project (PHWDP) July 2007 published by the Ministry of Health. Development of the Health Promotion workforce is one of the identified priorities.

Collective Action to Strengthen and Unify Health Promotion in Aotearoa-New Zealand July 2007. A new discussion paper raising the issues and setting the scene to move forward.

2009 *The HPF Board* identified the development of a health promotion professional association as a priority activity for HPF.

DHB Health Promotion Managers meeting 10 August, Wellington, mandated HPF to lead the establishment of an association.

PHA Conference, breakfast meeting 3 September, Wellington, mandated HPF to take action to ensure health promotion is where we want it in the future.

2010 *Working Group convened* to establish an inaugural association.