



**Hearts & Minds**  
Manawa Ora me te Hinengaro



**2025**

*Annual*  
**REPORT**

## Our Vision

### Where We Are Going

We envision a future where people and whānau proactively engage in mental health and wellbeing support, leading to stronger, healthier communities.



## Our Mission

### What We Do Now

To strengthen resilience in people, whānau, and communities through equitable access to high-quality mental health support. We are committed to developing and scaling our innovative model that delivers measurable outcomes.



## Our Purpose

### Why We Exist

We believe that people thrive when they are connected to the support and resources they need. We have the tools to improve the mental health of New Zealanders by moving them from vulnerability to resilience.



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# Letter from the Chair



This year has been a proud and defining one. While the quality of our services remains high under strong leadership, we have also secured new premises that enable growth, greater reach, and deeper accessibility for our communities.

The move to Albany, while continuing to prioritise Northcote and Glenfield, means more people can now access Hearts & Minds' mental wellbeing supports. With this expansion, we are now positioned to serve more people annually.

Our services — wellbeing courses and workshops, brief intervention counselling, support coordination, family/whānau support, and community directories — are designed to provide early intervention and wrap-around wellbeing care. This year, 97% of participants reported improvements in their wellbeing, a testament to the dedication of our team.

To Amberlee and Maria — your steadfast leadership has guided Hearts & Minds through growth and change while keeping our purpose at the forefront. Congratulations on a successful year, and thank you for your commitment.

To Brenden and Brigid — your energy, fresh perspectives, and commitment to governance, even with the demands of your personal and professional lives, is deeply valued. Your willingness to be present shows how important it is that mental health services remain accessible to all communities.

We also warmly welcome Shmily to the Board. We are fortunate to have you join us, and we look forward to your contributions as we continue to grow.

Reflecting on my first year as Chairperson, it has been a privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated and vision-driven group. Together we have proven the power of collective purpose, determination, and aroha. Looking ahead, our goal is to double participation in wellbeing courses and extend counselling services that remain free and accessible.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clayton Rangitutia". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Clayton Rangitutia  
Chairperson

# Chief Executive's Report



Our team has been tremendously honoured to support over 10,000 people to achieve improved mental wellbeing this year. We are energised by this reach because we know that our evidence-based model works— with over 97% of people reporting improved mental health after engaging our services. To every person who placed their trust in us to deliver the expertise, skill, and genuine care they sought—thank you. Your trust was well placed and is what inspires our commitment to continue to design and deliver the very best services for those who choose Hearts & Minds.

Our evidence-based model works because it meets people where they are. Through Health & Support Navigation, our Mental Wellbeing Programme, and this year's new Student Counselling pilot, we offer a complete, accessible spectrum: information when people need direction, counselling when they need support, and group education when they're ready to connect with others and gain transformative tools to improve their mental wellbeing.

This clarity of purpose matters because 2025 demanded both courage and precision. We relocated our main premises while maintaining our essential Northcote presence, expanded into Rosedale, and navigated an increasingly constrained funding environment. Our Board—Kaumatua John Marsden, Chair Clayton Rangitutia, Vice-Chair Brigid Furness, Treasurer Brenden Rolston, and Member Shmily Zhou stewarded us through complexity with aroha and wisdom. For that, and for your belief in our people and model, you have my deepest respect.

None of this happens without exceptional people doing exceptional work. I give special recognition to our incredible team who made this year's achievements possible. A sincere thank you to Maria Thorndyke who brings clinical excellence and strategic insight, Xiaoying Zhang's whose financial acumen keeps us grounded and growing and to Gabby Greene, Yavanna Hallam, Becky Gong, and Jemma Hoyle—your skill and heart make excellence look effortless. You are true community heroes.

My sincere appreciation also goes to our Clinical Consultant & Trainer, Dr Ruth Jillings, for her invaluable guidance and expertise. To our superbly talented pool of facilitators who deliver outstanding work with every programme, thank you! And to our student counsellors and volunteers who advance our mission with dedication and care—your contribution strengthens everything we do.


Experience shows us that as a sector we are stronger when we work together. We are deeply appreciative of the 200+ Health Providers and the 600+ community organisations across our regions who refer to Hearts & Minds—your trust in our model matters greatly. A very special mention also to our valued community partners Te Puna Hauora, The Fono, and The Asian Network Incorporated (TANI). Your support means the world to us and to the people we serve. Together we create culturally inclusive support that genuinely works - a very special taonga for our shared communities.

We are also immensely grateful to our funders—your investment is vital. It builds long-term health and resilience in our communities. The evidence confirms what we witness daily: early intervention reduces unnecessary human suffering, turns difficult situations around, and reduces the strain on New Zealand's mental health system, returning \$4.70 for every dollar invested.

The impact shows up in the data, but it lives in the voices of the people we serve. We receive extraordinary feedback from people who engage with our services—expressions of gratitude that remind us daily why this work is so important. One participant hit the bullseye in my heart recently with these simple words: *"Thank you! From the bottom of my heart thank-you!"*

That gratitude moves both ways. For Hearts & Minds, access to quality mental health support is not a privilege but a basic human right. Through our evidence-based programmes, people discover their own resilience and capacity for change. And when one person makes a positive change, they begin to transform their own world, with the ripple effect shaping the world we all share.

What we've achieved together this year proves what's possible—and what lies ahead excites us even more. We are so grateful to have you with us on this exciting mission.



Amberlee Wharton  
Chief Executive

# Treasurer's Report



This past financial year has been a year of transition for Hearts & Minds. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and acknowledge the leadership, staff and professional support for their tenacity and teamwork in adapting to, working with, and embracing change.

Hearts & Minds closed the financial accounts with a minimal loss of \$1,123. While this small deficit reflects a year of transition, it also demonstrates the organisation's financial resilience and prudent management during a period of relocation and change. Contributing factors included one-off relocation expenses for the North Shore offices and a 6% reduction in trading income compared with the previous financial year.

In managing both relocation expenses and income reduction, Hearts & Minds have been prudent in fiscal management resulting in a reduced total operation expense of 12%.

Although both funding and operational expenses have reduced, the Hearts & Minds staff have serviced an increased social demand for mental health services.

Hearts & Minds maintains a strong balance sheet with responsible operating reserves. This provides crucial stability and demonstrates our commitment to long-term sustainability, ensuring we can be a reliable partner for our funders and continue delivering vital services to our community.

To support the growing demand on Hearts & Minds mental health social services, the organisation has invested in recruiting an experienced fundraising manager. A combination of traditional and diversified funding initiatives has been strategised and is actively underway.

Hearts & Minds is dedicated to increasing social impact within the new financial year. A target revenue increase of 25% has been set within the forward budget to enable Hearts & Minds to service the growing demand for mental health services within our community. We remain committed to strengthening our balance sheet equity over the following three years.

Hearts & Minds is dedicated to maintaining strong fiscal governance while maintaining and building trusted relationships with our funding partners through the delivery of measurable results.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brenden Rolston'.

Brenden Rolston  
Treasurer

## About us

Hearts & Minds NZ is a primary mental health organisation that operates from a community delivery framework. We strengthen resilience in people, whānau, and communities through equitable access to high-quality mental health support.

We are committed to developing and scaling our innovative model that delivers measurable mental health outcomes across the continuum of care - from prevention and early intervention to recovery support. We believe that people thrive when they are connected to the support and resources they need.

Our purpose is to move people from vulnerability to resilience by providing accessible, community based mental health support that reduces the mid- to long-term cost of mental health to New Zealand, while maximising social and economic returns. All service delivery is underpinned by Te Tiriti O Waitangi, aligned to Ottawa and Bangkok Charters of Health Promotion, and designed to enhance wellbeing at all levels of society.

## Our Services



# Our Impact



**13,129**

Number of engagements with individuals & families



**434**

Group & Course Participants



**52**

Mental Wellbeing Groups & Courses delivered



**240**

Brief Intervention Counselling Sessions



**97%**

Participant satisfaction

# Our Feedback

"I don't feel down or depressed since starting therapy. Having a place I can go and talk about everything has made a huge difference to my wellbeing."  
*Counselling Client*

"I have become more social because the support I receive from the art therapy groups has built my confidence."  
*Group Participant*



"It feels like each time after I attended the workshop I peeled a layer of myself off and know a little bit more about myself and my experiences."  
*Group Participant*

"It gives me purpose to connect weekly, rather than to just soldier on and hope everything is OK. Definitely valuable and feels like I'm actively doing something to cope better."  
*Group Participant*

"Hearts & Minds is a FANTASTIC organisation! You have a GREAT team doing wonderful work and I know so many people REALLY appreciate what you do!!!"  
*Health & Support Navigation Client*

"Thank you for putting together such a valuable resource for both our Kaimahi and Tangata wha ora!"  
*Support Services Directory User*



# Health & Support Navigation

Our Health & Support Navigation service continues to be at the heart of what we do - connecting individuals and families with the right support at the right time. Through one-to-one, free and confidential guidance, our Support Navigators help people access best-fit resources across health, social and community services.

Many of the people we assist are facing challenges such as mental distress, social isolation, chronic illness, or financial hardship. Our team provides a safe and compassionate space to talk, explore needs, and create a pathway to support.

Over the past year, demand for navigation has grown significantly, reflecting ongoing community pressures. Despite this, our navigators supported thousands of people to find the help they needed — whether through counselling, housing, financial assistance, or wellbeing programmes. Feedback shows that clients leave feeling heard, hopeful, and better equipped to take their next step.



*Above: Our Support Coordination Team.  
From left: Yavanna, Gabby and Becky*


# Mental Wellbeing Programmes




Our Mental Wellbeing Groups and Courses offer safe, supportive environments where people can build resilience, confidence, and connection. Facilitated by experienced mental health professionals, these free or low-cost programmes provide evidence-based mental health education and support, covering a wide range of topics, including Managing Stress, Anxiety & Depression, Building Resilience, Self-Esteem, Confidence, Art Therapy and Transitioning through Loss and Change.

Courses are designed to be practical and inclusive, combining psychoeducation with peer support. Participants often tell us that being part of a group helped them feel less alone and more empowered in their personal wellbeing journeys.


We delivered 52 group programmes this year, both in-person and online, including culturally tailored courses in Mandarin to support the growing Asian community. Each course brings together people from diverse backgrounds who share a common goal - to strengthen their wellbeing and create positive change in their lives.



"I feel so lucky that I can participate and realise that I am not alone."



"Keep doing what you do :)"



"Really loved this class, was able to disconnect from everyday life and have fun and be creative again. After being very depressed, it was relieving."

# Student Counselling Pilot



This year, Hearts & Minds launched our Brief Intervention Counselling Pilot, providing accessible, affordable support for adults aged 18 and over, while also giving counselling students valuable hands-on experience.

Participants were able to access up to six sessions at \$15 per session, ensuring cost was not a barrier to receiving help.

The pilot offered short-term, focused counselling to support people with challenges such as stress, anxiety, low mood, life transitions, and relationship difficulties. We supported two final-year counselling students, under the supervision of our Clinical Director, Maria Thorndyke (*pictured above*), to work collaboratively with clients to develop practical strategies and coping skills, helping them manage immediate challenges and improve overall wellbeing.



This pilot addressed an important community need for timely, low-cost counselling while supporting the next generation of mental health professionals. Feedback was positive, with many clients reporting increased confidence, resilience, and improved wellbeing after attending sessions, and students gaining meaningful experience and practical skills in a community setting.

"I loved having an anchor in my week and felt uplifted and positive after each session."

"I have learned how to manage my stress and gain knowledge about what things I can control and what I cannot."

"I believe the tools I learnt will help me going forward."

# Support Services Directory



Our Support Services Directory remains one of Hearts & Minds' most trusted and valued community resources. Available both online and in hard copy, the Directory provides comprehensive listings of health, social and community services - helping individuals, whānau, and professionals quickly connect with the right support. We currently produce two regional editions: one for Waitematā and one for Tai Tokerau.

This year, we began the important process of updating the more than 700 organisations featured in the Directory in preparation for our 2026/27 print edition. With the help of a dedicated team of volunteers, we aim to complete this significant update by the end of 2025.

Feedback about the Directory continues to be outstanding, with many individuals and community organisations expressing how valuable it is as a go-to resource. Demand for the new edition has been strong, with numerous people and agencies already registering their interest to receive a copy once published.



*Directory Volunteer - Stephen Jenkins*



# Community Engagement

Community engagement is at the heart of everything we do. Every connection we make, every conversation we have, and every network we participate in shapes the support we deliver. We believe that meaningful change happens through genuine collaboration. That's why we actively connect with over 200 GP practices and 600 community and not-for-profit organisations across our regions, building relationships that ensure people get the right support at the right time.



We participate in multi-sectoral networks, contribute to public consultations, and remain deeply involved in the conversations that matter - because the wellbeing of our community depends on us listening, learning, and working together. Our work is strengthened by valued partnerships with Te Puna Hauora, The Fono, and The Asian Health Network Incorporated (TANI). These relationships reflect our commitment to culturally responsive, community-led mental health support. To these key partners and the many others who stand alongside us - thank you. Together, we're building something powerful.



*Above from left: The Fono morning tea, community outreach at Z Albany, Zoholics*

# Shared Vision

Mental health doesn't exist in isolation - it's shaped by the systems, services, and support available in our communities. That's where Shared Vision comes in. Shared Vision is our proactive, community-wide approach to strengthening the mental health landscape. We work directly with community members, organisations, and decision makers to identify what's working, what's missing, and what's needed. Then we take action - advocating for change, coordinating responses, and filling gaps where they exist.

This year, Shared Vision made a real difference across multiple fronts. Children from low-income families gained access to sports programmes that boosted both their physical and mental wellbeing, and mental health organisations received support to navigate complex systems and connect their clients with the most appropriate care. Through active participation in regional networks, we continued our work of listening to emerging concerns and collaborating with partners to address them as they arose.

One issue came through loud and clear: social isolation is affecting too many people in our community, with serious impacts on mental health. In response, we're launching the Connections Café in 2026 - a welcoming space designed to combat loneliness and help people build the meaningful social connections that are essential to wellbeing.

Shared Vision is about seeing the bigger picture and making sure no one falls through the cracks. It's community-led mental health in action.



Thank you so much Hearts & Minds for your support, it is meaning a lot to me."



# Our Board & Team



**John Marsden**  
Kaumatua



**Clayton Rangitua**  
Chairperson



**Brigid Furness**  
Vice Chairperson



**Brenden Rolston**  
Treasurer



**Shmily Zhou**  
Board Member



**Amberlee Wharton**  
Chief Executive



**Maria Thorndyke**  
Clinical Director



**Xiaoying Zhang**  
Accountant



**Yavanna Hallam**  
Community  
Engagement & Support  
Coordinator



**Gabby Greene**  
Support Services  
Lead



**Becky Gong**  
Operational Support  
Coordinator



**Jemma Hoyle**  
Funding Projects  
Manager

# Our Counsellors & Facilitators



**Maria Thorndyke**  
Clinical Director / Facilitator



**Dr. Ruth Jillings**  
Clinical Consultant  
& Trainer



**Nicola Duncan**  
Counsellor / Facilitator



**Karen Venter**  
Psychologist / Facilitator



**Becky Gong**  
Psychologist / Facilitator



**Lara Douse**  
Mental Health Nurse /  
Counsellor / Facilitator



**Sharon Logan**  
Mental Health Nurse /  
Counsellor / Facilitator



**Sasha Iyengar**  
Mental Health Art  
Therapist / Facilitator



**Laverne Robinson**  
Facilitator



**Mary McGeever**  
Art Therapist / Facilitator



**Angie Richardson**  
Art Therapist / Facilitator



**Matthew Flynn**  
Counsellor / Facilitator



**Virginia Frankovich**  
Clinical Art Therapist /  
Facilitator



**Bex Davies**  
Student Counsellor



**Fiona Sylvestre**  
Student Counsellor

# Thank you to our funders

Hearts & Minds extends our sincere thanks to the many funders, partners, and supporters who made our work possible this year. Your generosity has enabled us to deliver vital wellbeing services across our community, from one-to-one Health & Support Navigation, to our Mental Wellbeing Groups and Courses, and the Brief Intervention Counselling Pilot.

Your support has helped us reach thousands of individuals and families, ensuring that people experiencing distress, isolation, or life challenges could access timely, compassionate, and practical help.

Together, we are building stronger, more connected communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand  
Waitematā

 **FOUNDATION NORTH**  
Te Kaitiaki Pūtea ō  
Tāmaki ō Tai Tokerau

Supported by **Lotto** New Zealand  
Funded by **NZ Lottery Grants Board**

**COGS**  
Community Organisation  
Grants Scheme

 **THE LION FOUNDATION**

**Kaipātiki Local Board**  
Auckland Council 

 Ministry for  
**Ethnic Communities**  
Te Tari Mātāwaka

 **Pub Charity**  
THE HEART OF COMMUNITY FUNDING

  
**MILESTONE**  
Foundation

 **Four Winds**  
FOUNDATION

 **Constellation**  
COMMUNITIES TRUST



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**Hearts & Minds**  
Manawa Ora me te Hinengaro  
*Strengthening the Wellbeing of People and Communities*