

Challenge and change

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Tēnā koutou katoa and malo e lelei.

We're delighted that despite the ever-present challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brings, *Evaluation Matters—He Take Tō Te Aromatawai* continues to publish evaluation insights from Aotearoa and internationally. This issue takes a broad sweep of perspectives that convey the challenges we face and changes we constantly are having to navigate.

Although Aotearoa has weathered the COVID storm more strongly than most countries, we have not been immune from the impacts of the pandemic on whānau, communities, business, not-for-profit organisations, and government. At the time of writing, we face a second wave from Auckland, and the uncertainty of the future we face is again apparent.

As convenors of ANZEA, we have seen first-hand how deeply affected the organisation has been by COVID-19. As an organisation, we have had to significantly adapt our approach to maintain viability, and also to find and grow opportunities to strengthen ANZEA's contribution to the evaluation profession and the role of evaluation in Aotearoa.

As COVID-19 spread and as lockdown loomed, the Board and the conference committee made the difficult decision to postpone the

2020 Conference to March 2021. One way or another, we look forward to a successful conference in 2021. The conference will give us all the opportunity to reflect on evaluation's contribution to social and environmental wellbeing, as the world emerges from COVID and considers how we can "build back better" for a more just, equitable, and sustainable global way of living.

The challenges we faced meant that a more "tactical and transformational" approach was required for ANZEA. We moved our Board meetings from three full-day meetings per year to monthly meetings that are shorter in duration. This is already working to build and maintain momentum in our activities, and stay abreast of developments.

Lockdown also meant that our well-established face-to-face models of professional development and branch engagement were not viable. From this challenge, our professional development subgroup developed an exciting online programme, beginning with free lunch-time events that have been well attended from across the country. This was followed by paid half-day and multi-day professional development opportunities. These will continue into the year ahead and offer much greater opportunities for connecting ANZEA members across Aotearoa, including many who, for reasons of distance and isolation, were often unable to participate in branch and professional development activity.

The upheaval of COVID-19 also came at a time of some personnel change. We are delighted at how our new managers, Tess Laurenson and Raewyn McLean, have brought fresh energy and outlooks to the organisation, and have delivered the on the ground implementation of new activities.

To maintain a flourishing ANZEA and evaluation community, we need to ensure ANZEA has revenue and funds available to sustain its activity. This inevitably means that offerings such as our online professional development and the conference incur fees, and we are

constantly working to ensure they are affordable and deliver value to members.

Despite the many challenges of this period, we are greatly heartened by the response of Board members, our managers, and the wider evaluation community in Aotearoa. Your collective contributions make a real and tangible difference and enable us to grow and sustain our community of practice, that is ANZEA. We are excited and confident for the future of ANZEA and the new connections that are being forged.

Nō reirā, tēnā koutou katoa