



WFMT BUZZ
From the desk of Dr. Anita L. Swanson



World Federation of Music Therapy
Federación Mundial de Musicoterapia

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Greetings WFMT members!

This month we have the pleasure of hearing from our **Australia and New Zealand Regional Liaison, Dr. Daphne Rickson.**



Kia ora koutou (Hello everyone)

Welcome to what's 'buzzing' in the Australia and New Zealand region!

Let's begin with our professional associations. The Australian Music Therapy Association (AMTA) and Music Therapy New Zealand (MThNZ) work to support the development of music therapy by advocating for the profession, and confirming that ethical and profession standards are upheld, thus ensuring music therapists are in turn able to support the health

and wellbeing of people in our communities. Each country has its own registration processes for music therapists and provides lists of registered members and job opportunities. The AMTA also accredits university courses to ensure training and standards remain high quality. We have three training programmes in the region, at the University of Melbourne, Western Sydney University, and Victoria University of Wellington (Te Herenga Waka).

The AMTA and MThNZ work hard to advocate for the profession of music therapy. For example, during 2021 the AMTA engaged with the Australian National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); Victorian Government's Schools Mental Health Fund; the Royal Commission's review into aged care; proposed Private Health Insurance reforms; and the Mental Health Productivity Commissions report on mental health. All these activities ensure that music therapy is represented clearly and fairly and included as an option for service users, whenever possible. 'Across the ditch', a local expression meaning across the sea, MThNZ had input into a review of the New Zealand Autism Guideline produced by the Ministries of Health and Education, which resulted in the recommendation in that "music therapy can enhance social communication skills and should be considered for children and young people on the autism spectrum". They are currently working to determine whether/how music therapists might be recognised within the New Zealand Government's Health Professionals Competency Act. The situation is complex and will involve scoping projects to look at the benefits and challenges of moving this forward. In both countries, music therapists maintain close links with Allied Health Professionals groups, thus maximising the potential for us to contribute effectively to systemic change.

Each country publishes its own peer reviewed music therapy journal, the Australian Journal of Music Therapy, and the New Zealand Journal of Music Therapy respectively. In 2021 the AMTA were able to publish two issues for the first time – including a special issue focusing on the development of online telehealth approaches. Meeting and working online has become a relatively usual practice for many music therapists across our Australia and New Zealand region, just as it has in many other regions of the world.

Our professional associations also facilitate professional development programs and events. Two examples include the AMTA's recently launched learning platform where members can access music therapy resources addressing a range of topics "from self-care to aged care, and everything in between"; and Music Therapy New Zealand's Webinar 2021 series which covered a wide range of topics. Each country also holds a national conference or symposium: yearly in Australia, and every two years in New Zealand. The 2021 Australian Music Therapy Association conference was run online, with the theme of "Amplify, Integrate and Evolve". The theme enabled music therapists and others involved with music therapy to embrace the innovative changes that have occurred in music therapy in recent times. In New Zealand we were able to have an in-person 2021 symposium, with the theme of 'Collaboration', a week before the country was plunged into lockdown. The symposium

provided music therapists with an important opportunity to open discussions about the weaving of indigenous music practices and beliefs with western music therapy approaches. These are crucial conversations for us to have.

While we have distinct indigenous histories, Australia and New Zealand were both colonised by Britain, and our two countries have become closely integrated regionally, economically, politically, and culturally. Our quality of life by international standards is, overall, high. However, as has happened in many other countries, colonisation has exposed our indigenous peoples to injustices which have destabilised their communities, disrupted long established knowledge-practices, and ultimately ensured that they have become dependent on colonial economic systems (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). For example, colonisation has had deep negative consequences for the health, and wellbeing of Māori populations in New Zealand (Aotearoa) (Durie, 2012; Reid et. al., 2016; Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). Health providers are therefore urged to provide care in a way that respects and understands Māori sociocultural paradigms including “open exploration, engagement and embracing of matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in relation to health and wellbeing” (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019, p. 25).

Like other health and disability practices in our countries, our music therapy training courses and practices have been grounded in western medical traditions. We therefore experience many painful tensions as we acknowledge our mistakes and try to learn about whether and how we might collaborate with indigenous partners as we move forward. Nevertheless, our commitment and determination to make space for different ways of understanding and being is growing. MThNZ have resolved to ask ourselves whether we are truly embracing a Māori world view (te ao Māori) through our purpose and mission; and ensuring the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are included in everything do. We are taking cautious baby steps, doing what we can to respectfully include indigenous practises. Small but meaningful examples, from both countries, include the first translation of official music therapy documents into te reo Māori (the WFMT Culturally Informed Telehealth flyer in the Māori language); and the new Inclusivity Statement produced by the AMTA Culture and Diversity Working Group which reads:

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work upon. We recognise the enduring kinship and songlines retained in these lands and we cherish the rich and ongoing connections First Nations Peoples have to Country, culture, song, knowledge, and artistic expression. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise that sovereignty over these lands was never ceded. We strive to embrace and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies, and abilities.

Naturally, our professional associations also maintain close links with the WFMT. On World Music Therapy Day, for example, we were pleased to be able to share musical examples,

stories, photos, and celebrations from our part of the world on social media, and to host local events which helped to increase awareness of the ways music therapy can support individuals and groups within our own communities. In New Zealand, we also celebrate Music Therapy Week, which last year enabled music therapists to be featured on prime-time television news programmes and interviewed for radio broadcasts and other publications, and to facilitate public events in their communities and online.

In a contrasting example of our collaborations with WFMT, New Zealand has drawn on the work of the WFMT Global Crises Intervention team, as we established our own Aotearoa Crisis Intervention (ACI) group. This enables us to offer a coordinated response, to provide mutual exchanges of messages of support, and to share resources when our communities are affected by community-wide events, or events that might have a significant impact on a community of vulnerable people. New Zealand music therapists have been extremely grateful to receive messages of concern and best wishes from WFMT, following mass shootings, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunami threats. In Australia too, the AMTA provide information for music therapists about where they can find support for disastrous events such as the COVID pandemic, and recent catastrophic flooding in the New South Wales and Queensland areas of Australia. This leads to my final message of love and best wishes to all people in the world who have been affected by war in the Ukraine. Kia kaha (stand strong) everyone.

Noho ora mai (Stay well, look after yourself, goodbye).

Daphne

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