



By 2030, reduce rates of non-communicable diseases and mental illness and improve associated health equity outcomes for target groups

MEET OUR MANU TAKI KAREN COVELL

Progressing the wellbeing message

Joining the dots with other community organisations is the key to improving wellbeing outcomes, says Progress to Health CE Karen Covell.

Progress to Health is a community-based organisation with 25 staff supporting people with long term mental health issues or disabilities in the Waikato, Taranaki and Taupo areas.

Covell is a Manu Taki for SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing. A no-brainer really, as enhancing wellbeing is what they do every day. "Progress to Health is predominantly a wellbeing organisation so anything that will promote wellbeing as something normal - rather than something that is looked at or avoided - is only going to help what we do."

Covell explains one recent situation whereby groups with a community focus worked together to achieve a meaningful outcome, through something as simple as compost.

It started when Progress to Health worked alongside Hamilton City Council in taking over an old bowling club in Fairfield, turning it into a community garden.

"Through these conversations we have now linked with Go Eco, who was then able to link us with Hamilton City Council's new compost system whereby all the food scraps were going out to Hampton Downs and being turned into compost."

"They donated to us a whole heap of this compost, not only to be put on our gardens but to be shared around the other gardens."

Covell uses this example to illustrate collaboration in practice. "So, all of a sudden you have a conveyer belt of the people working in compost, doing something that can directly help someone else's wellbeing by providing a medium to help food to grow."

"It is strengthening those communities and breaking down those barriers."

No surprises, that she is a big fan of working together. "So, what we have done over time, particularly in recent months, that we actually have a voice at each other's tables."

This is what excites Covell about The Waikato Wellbeing Project. "We have all got that collective wish that something is different at the end, and it is something that benefits the Waikato."

"It is this idea that the conversation - we could be talking housing - and the idea that good housing improves someone's wellbeing, or access to good food, can in turn help someone's wellbeing."

"If nothing else comes out of it, if we are able to say, 'we support the work you are doing and we are going to support you' and maybe there is that reciprocal response and we come out of it stronger, and if that is the only outcome then I think I would be quite happy with that."