

## Pacific Consumer Recovery Conference

### *Speech notes:*

Talofa lava, kia orana, malo e lelei, fakaalofa lahi atu, bula vinaka, taloha ni, ia orana and warm Pacific greetings.

I would like to start by sharing with you a quote cited in a document called: *'Our lives in 2014: A recovery vision from people with experience of mental illness'*. This document was published with the assistance of the Mental Health Commission in 2004:

*"A vision without a task is a dream, and a task without a vision is a drudgery – but a vision with a task can change the world"*  
Black Elk, Indigenous American novelist<sup>1</sup>

This document developed by leaders in the sector had a very clear vision:

*"In 2014 all Tangata motuhake in New Zealand have personal power, a valued place in our whanau and communities, and services that support us to lead our own recovery."*

Le Va is honoured to sponsor and support this landmark conference, as we believe that it represents a vision with a task. Many times, good ideas die or never come to fruition for whatever reason. This conference could just as easily have suffered the same fate of countless other good ideas. What makes this event different is that it started from an idea, transformed into a vision and is now a reality with a sense of purpose and set tasks to be completed as its outcome.

Le Va is proud to have supported this vision from the outset as sponsor. I acknowledge the Waitemata DHB and especially my co-sponsor and manager of Takanga a Fohe, Pulutu Bruce Levi and his dedicated team led by Papali'i Seiuli Johnny Siaosi. Le Va has worked closely with the Waitemata DHB team and Conference organising committee. The logistics have been challenging with regional groups spread throughout the country. However, today is a culmination of the tireless efforts of Johnny and his dedicated team. Fa'afetai tele lava!

If you are still unsure about this recovery conference and what it is about and what it might achieve, I challenge you to open your hearts and minds. The outlook looks bleak in these difficult economic times. Those of our community, who are the most vulnerable, will struggle to survive. This is especially so for our loved ones who also experience mental illness.

This conference itself is part of a recovery journey. The stories that are shared at this forum are poignant reminders of dreams that were made and dreams that have been shattered. This conference is not only about charting a course for the future but is

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in *'Our lives in 2014'*, published with the assistance of the Mental Health Commission, Wellington, New Zealand, 2004

also an opportunity to acknowledge the past and to share the stories of those who came before.

A publication by the Mental health commission in 2000<sup>2</sup> on Pacific peoples experience with mental illness, outlined three key elements that aided recovery. These were faith, family and personal strengths. Today has all of these elements and more. This conference honours the drive to have a fundamental shift to a recovery philosophy, because recovery is also about hope. For some, this hope can be the difference between life and death.

I would like to end by sharing a quote by the acclaimed author Salman Rushdie:

*“Those who do not have power over the stories that dominate their lives, power to retell them, rethink them, deconstruct them, joke about them, and change them... truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Nonumalo, V. Pacific people in New Zealand talk about their experiences with mental illness, Mental Health Commission, April 2000