

Asian Youth Artwork Presentations

Jason Tran

Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Jason Tran (he/him) is a Kiwi-born, first-generation queer Chinese currently working in Tech. As a Solutions Engineer at SAP, he works closely with organisations across Australia and New Zealand to map out their business challenges and design software solutions that improve their operations. He graduated from the University of Auckland with a background in Engineering, Economics, and Finance. Raised in South Auckland by parents who came to New Zealand as refugees, Jason brings a strong equity lens to his work and identity. He previously contributed to the Thriving @ Crossroads research group two years ago, exploring intersectional experiences in Aotearoa.

Gabrina Zhao

Asian Family Services



Gabrina Zhao is an 11-year-old New Zealand-born Chinese girl in Year 6 at primary school. She lives in Auckland with her mum, dad, two sisters, and their two playful dogs. Gabrina has a passion for netball and golf, enjoys playing the piano, and treasures the time she spends with her friends. Known for her cheerful nature and love of learning, Gabrina brings energy and kindness to everything she does.

Opening Address

Hon Matt Doocey

Minister of Mental Health and Associate Minister of Health



Hon Matt Doocey is the Minister for Mental Health and Associate Minister of Health. Matt has been the MP for Waimakariri since the 2014 election. He previously worked in mental health in both New Zealand and the UK, before returning home to work at the Canterbury District Health Board. Matt went to St Bede's College before completing a BSc (Hons) in Social Policy, an MA in Healthcare Management from Kingston University in London, and an MSc in Global Politics from Birkbeck College, University of London.

Plenary session: Asian Youth Lived Experience

Michelle Delves

Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Michelle Delves is of Taiwanese and English descent, was born and raised in the UAE, and is now based in Aotearoa New Zealand. A New Zealander from birth, with a bilingual Eurasian identity and a cross-cultural lens, she brings a rich multicultural perspective to everything she does.

She has a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) from the University of Auckland and works as a Data & Analytics Engineer at Air New Zealand, where she champions Women in Digital values. Alongside her technical role, she is also a multi-instrumentalist and music

teacher and serves as a Youth and Ethnic Advisor for the University of Auckland and Asian Family Services.

Michelle strives to bring heart to everything she does, creating inclusive and equitable spaces that promote wellbeing and ensure all communities feel seen, valued, and empowered.

Dr Annie Chiang

Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Annie Chiang is a Professional Teaching Fellow at the University of Auckland. She recently completed her PhD on missingness and the ethics of being visible or invisible in government collected datasets. Her current research is on data sovereignty and what this means for ethnic communities.

Annie investigated suicide risk in Aotearoa New Zealand as part of her Master of Public Health. Her interest in this space is rooted in her lived experience as someone bereft by suicide, and personal experience with depression and anxiety.

Michelle Lei

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand with roots in China, Michelle is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Psychology and minoring in Case Management. She is passionate about mental health, understanding human behaviour, and supporting Tamariki. Through her mahi and lived experience of mental distress, she is committed to creating positive change and promoting wellbeing in the community. Outside of work you will find her in the gym, hiking, or at the beach!

Dileetha Kohoban

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Dileetha utilises his lived experience to inform and support his work with Tamariki. He was born in Sri Lanka and lived in Fiji before moving to Aotearoa. He is currently in his final semester of his undergraduate degree majoring in Psychology in conjoint with Population Health at the University of Auckland. Dileetha is passionate about men's and youth mental health, with a strong desire to break down stigma and work alongside these populations. In his spare time, Dileetha loves playing and watching sports, going to the gym, trying new restaurants, and spending time with friends and family.

Paolo Aquino

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Paolo is a 1.5 generation Filipino raised in Tāmaki Makaurau. Paolo holds a Bachelor of Advanced Science in Psychology with First Class Honours from the University of Auckland. His research interests centre on Indigenous (Asian) psychologies, therapies, and values, with a strong passion for advancing Asian men's mental health in Aotearoa. Paolo is fluent in Tagalog and Bisaya, bringing cultural and linguistic depth to his peer support work.

Keynote Address: Contextualising Asian Youth Mental Health in Aotearoa New Zealand

Associate Professor Roshini Peiris-John

Principal Investigator, Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Dr Roshini Peiris-John (MBBS, PhD) is Associate Professor in Epidemiology and Co-Director of the Centre for Asian and Ethnic Minority Health Research and Evaluation at Waipapa Taumata Rau (University of Auckland). Roshini leads Thriving at Crossroads, a project that explores how varying social identities and affiliations of Asian and ethnic minority youth (including migration generation, gender diversity etc.) intersect with health experiences, including the impacts of systemic discrimination.

Roshini is Asian and migrant lead of the Adolescent Health Research Group that has led the Youth2000 national secondary school surveys with transformative impact on hauora/ ora of Rangatahi in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Panel Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities for Advancing Asian Youth Mental Health

Kiri Richards

Associate Deputy Director-General Mental Health, Addiction and Suicide Prevention, Ministry of Health



Kiri Richards is the Associate Deputy Director-General for Mental Health, Addiction and Suicide Prevention at the Ministry of Health. She has led and been involved in recent work to strengthen New Zealand's approach to mental health and wellbeing. This includes the recently released Suicide Prevention Action Plan and Strategy to Prevent and Minimise Gambling Harm, progression of the Mental Health Bill, development of Kia Manawanui: Long-term pathway to mental wellbeing, and a number of Government Budget processes

which have seen increased investment in mental health. Kiri has held a range of technical advisory and leadership roles in consulting and the public sector with a focus on strategy and policy.

Dr Leeanne Fisher she/her, MBChB FRANZCP AFRACMA Cert Child Psych

National Chief, Mental Health and Addiction, Health NZ

Leeanne is a bi-nationally trained child & adolescent psychiatrist with more than 20 years' experience working as a consultant in public mental health services in both New Zealand and Australia. Leeanne combined her interests in child & youth psychiatry and quality and systems improvement as she took on senior leadership positions as the Medical Director at Orygen Youth Health in Melbourne (2012-2014), the Clinical Director for Child & Youth Services at Austin Health (2015-2022) with regional and statewide responsibilities for delivery of service and then as Deputy Chief Psychiatrist in Victoria's Department of Health (2022-2024). She returned to New Zealand in November 2024 as the inaugural National Chief Mental Health & Addiction for Health New Zealand|Te Whatu Ora and is based in Wellington|Poneke.

Lisa Gestro

Interim Director of Mental Health Commissioning | Health System Executive and Strategic Leader

Lisa Gestro is a senior health executive with over two decades of experience leading system transformation, integration, and strategic investment across the New Zealand health sector. Since March 2025, she has been serving as the Interim Director of Mental Health Commissioning for Te Whatu Ora – a break from her substantive role as Group Manager, System Integration, in the Te Manawa Taki region.

Nationally, Lisa has influenced policy and system change through her leadership of ACC's Health of Older Persons Integration Programme, where she introduced new

service pathways and case-mix funding models. Her earlier work in planning and funding at Auckland, Counties Manukau, and Southern DHBs laid the foundation for her sector-wide reputation for credible, values-based leadership and delivery.

Lisa now resides in the Waikato with her husband and two teenage daughters.

Moderator: Dr Kelly Feng

Chief Executive, Asian Family Services



Appointed Chief Executive of Asian Family Services (AFS) in July 2022, Dr Kelly Feng previously served as National Director from 2016, leading the organisation's growth and development over nine years and guiding its transition to full autonomy.

Originally trained as a medical doctor in China, Dr Feng migrated to New Zealand in 2002 and later became a registered social worker. Her dual expertise enables her to integrate both clinical and social perspectives in advancing the wellbeing of Asian communities in Aotearoa.

For over a decade, Dr Feng has been a national leader in addressing gambling harm, mental health, addiction, and suicide prevention among Asian populations. She is recognised for her ability to design innovative, culturally responsive services and research-informed programmes that respond directly to systemic service gaps.

In 2007, she pioneered the Asian Mental Health Services pilot for Waitematā DHB, establishing culturally responsive services that included clinical consultation and cultural coordination across all mental health services.

In 2016, recognising the ongoing service gaps, she established Asian Wellbeing Services, a social enterprise model delivering multilingual, culturally matched psychological and counselling services nationwide.

Dr Feng has led numerous national research projects that have generated critical evidence and insights into the mental health and addiction experiences of Asian communities in New Zealand. Her leadership has driven initiatives such as the Asian Mental Health and Addiction focused research, cutting-edge gambling harm research, and the development of the Integrated Tree Model—a culturally grounded framework now embedded across AFS's work.

Beyond her service leadership, Dr Feng is a strong advocate for strategic and policy-level change. She works across the health, education, and social sectors to influence government agencies and champion systemic reforms that ensure Asian communities are visible, resourced, and represented in national strategies and funding decisions.

In 2021, Dr Feng was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) in recognition of her outstanding contributions to health and Asian communities in Aotearoa.

Alex Schröder

Assistant Ombudsman, Office of the Ombudsman



Alex Schroder is the Assistant Ombudsman Engagement at the Office of the Ombudsman. He has worked for the Ombudsman since 2011 in a variety of investigative, advisory and management roles. Alex has also spent much of his career working in the Office's disability, international and official information sectors.

Alex's current role involves leading a group of teams, which are responsible for internal and external communications and public relations, delivering internal and external learning and assisting the Chief Ombudsmen in his disability rights and international relations work.

Melissa Derby, Kaihautū Whakawhanaungatanga-ā-Iwi Race Relations Commissioner



Currently serving as the Race Relations Commissioner for Te Kāhui Tika Tangata | New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Melissa brings nearly 10 years of experience in human rights advocacy. Her previous role was in the School of Education at the University of Waikato, where her teaching and research focused on children's early learning and development, Māori education and success, and literacy as a human right.

Her scholarship has been recognised through a range of awards including a Fulbright Graduate award, a Royal Commonwealth award, a SAGE Young Writer's award, and two awards from the Royal Society of New Zealand. Her published books include a children's book in te reo Māori

and a co-edited book on a bicultural research framework.

In her current role as Race Relations Commissioner, Melissa is committed to ensuring the rights of all groups in New Zealand are upheld, and to promoting harmonious relations through open dialogue and common connections.

Keynote address: Kia kuru pounamu te rongō: Holding the Highest Aspirations for Our Mokopuna

Dr Claire Achmad

Chief Children's Commissioner, Mana Mokopuna



Dr Claire Achmad is Te Kaikōmihana mō ngā Tamariki, Aotearoa New Zealand's Children's Commissioner, and leads Mana Mokopuna – Children's Commissioner. She is a visible independent advocate for all children under 18 and all children and young people under 25 who have been in, or who are in, care and/or custody. Claire meets mokopuna in their communities across the motu, listening with care to understand their lives, moemoeā

and challenges, and connecting with their whānau, hapū, iwi and villages. She then carries mokopuna experiences, ideas for change and voices to decision-makers across Government and throughout hapori. In her role, Claire has been a vocal advocate championing mokopuna and their rights on a range of issues and leading public discourse. Claire's core commitment as Children's Commissioner is to ground all her advocacy in what she hears from mokopuna - their lived experience and voices, and to promote and progress children's rights.

Claire has previously worked in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally in a wide range of areas relating to children's rights, including from legal, policy and practice perspectives. Immediately prior to her current role, she was Chief Executive Officer of Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa from March 2021-September 2023, playing key leadership role in New Zealand's community-based social services, while inclusively developing the organisation's membership and lifting its profile. Claire holds a doctorate in international children's rights law from Leiden University, where she maintains a Guest Lectureship in the Child Law Department, and has published internationally on a range of children's rights issues. Claire was born and grew up amongst kauri and kererū in the Waitākere Ranges, went to school in West Auckland, and is of woven heritage (Indonesian, Pākehā). She lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

Group Discussion briefing – AFS Integrated Tree Model

Chiely Utley

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Chiely's whakapapa is to Japan and Aotearoa. She brings a lived experience of mental health and growing up in Aotearoa as a mixed Asian young person. Chiely is a graduate of Bachelors of Health Science in Psychology from AUT. She is passionate about applying both lived experience and academic knowledge in her mahi with tamariki. Outside of work Chiely likes to spend time with her guinea pigs and ride her motorbike.

Neil Sagun

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Neil (he/him) is a 1.5-generation Filipino, currently working as a Child & Youth peer support worker for Asian Family Services. Graduating with a Bachelor of Health Science, Neil's passions lie in youth mental health and community health. In his own time Neil likes to play basketball, and he also enjoys listening to music and playing the guitar.

Asian Family Services Kia Ora Ake Presentation

Cindy Huynh (she/her)

Clinical Lead – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Cindy is a registered occupational therapist with roots back to Vietnam, Cambodia and China. Cindy's background is in youth development, supporting young people to achieve their goals from a holistic occupational perspective. Cindy is dedicated to supporting our programme design and works alongside our peer support team to ensure evidence based, lived experience and culturally appropriate practices.

Romy Lee (she/her)

National Manager - Child and Youth Mental Health

Principal Advisor – Lived Experience

Asian Family Services



Romy is a registered mental health and addiction practitioner who walks between the worlds of clinical practice and lived experience leadership. Her career spans service development, strategic advisory and workforce development, not to mention, her expertise in clinical and lived experience practice. She is inspired by the experiences of her communities to improve the systems behind mental wellbeing in Aotearoa.

Romy's expertise has been recognised nationally and internationally by organisations such as the World Health Organisation and Global Leadership Exchange for mental health, addiction and disability. She also works as a subject matter advisor to media agencies and corporate partners in Aotearoa and abroad.

Romy heads up child and youth mental health services and lived experience at Asian Family Services where she leads Kia Ora Ake, a first of its kind service, delivering mental wellbeing support to Asian tamariki aged 5-13 in Counties Manukau.

She is also a Board Member of dapaanz, Aotearoa's addiction practitioners association.

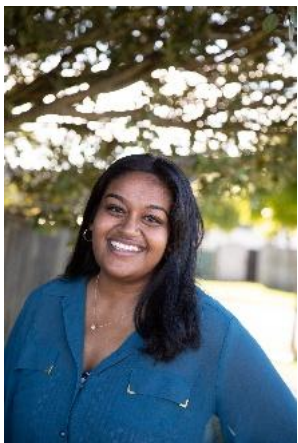
Plenary - Group Discussion Feedback

Celesti Tan, Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Celesti Tan is currently a MPH student who graduated from the University of Auckland with a BHSc (Population Health) and BSc (Psychology) degree in 2024. She is currently a Research Assistant on two School of Population Health projects—the Sex and Prevention of Transmission study and co-creating a resource for migrant parents to support their children’s mental health. Celesti holds the mahi of the Thriving at Crossroads team close to her heart and is delighted to be one of the presenters at the Asian Youth Mental Health Summit alongside so many people she has looked up to since starting university!

Nikki Singh, Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Nikki Singh is a PhD candidate at the University of Auckland, School of Population Health, researching autoimmune disease and identity for young adults in Aotearoa. Her research and work endeavours include Fiji-Indian dual identities, sex selection and gender bias for migrant women in Aotearoa, intersectionality, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, sexual violence prevention, safe spaces for ethnic minorities and exercise initiatives for communities living in low-income areas. Overall, her faith centres all that she does in the pursuit of research and health equity.

Dr Lovely Dizon, Thriving@Crossroads Project, University of Auckland



Lovely Dizon is a proud 1.5-generation Filipino. She completed her doctorate in public health at the University of Auckland in 2023. Her research focuses on 1.5 and second-generation Asian youth, ethnic identity development, mental health and access to support services. She is the Chair of the Adolescent Health Research Group and is part of Asian-specific ethnic advisory groups across the motu. Currently, she works as a research and evaluation advisor for a non-government organisation and is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Auckland.

Paolo Aquino

Child and Youth Peer Support – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Paolo is a 1.5 generation Filipino raised in Tāmaki Makaurau. Paolo holds a Bachelor of Advanced Science in Psychology with First Class Honours from the University of Auckland. His research interests centre on Indigenous (Asian) psychologies, therapies, and values, with a strong passion for advancing Asian men's mental health in Aotearoa. Paolo is fluent in Tagalog and Bisaya, bringing cultural and linguistic depth to his peer support work.

Linda Duong (she/her)

Clinical Lead – Kia Ora Ake, Asian Family Services



Linda is a 2nd generation Asian kiwi, with family heritage spanning from China, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Linda is a registered occupational therapist with diverse experience in the mental health sector. She is passionate about supporting Tamariki, Rangatahi and whanau with fostering wellbeing and fulfilling lives. Linda is committed to contributing to our programme design, working alongside our peer support team to ensure clinically appropriate and culturally responsive services.

Closing Remarks: The Future is Now

Karen Orsborn

Chief Executive, Te Hiringa Mahara, Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission



Karen is the Chief Executive of Te Hiringa Mahara | Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Karen has held a variety of health management and leadership roles that focus on improving outcomes for people through working with people and communities.

Previously, Karen was Deputy Chief Executive at the Health Quality and Safety Commission (HQSC) - leading national patient safety and quality improvement programmes across public and private hospitals, primary and community care, mental health and addiction services, and aged care. Karen has also held roles at the Ministry of Health and Hawkes Bay District Health Board. Karen is a former President of the NZ branch of the Australasian College of Health Services Management.