



# Executive Summary

This document presents the key findings from a survey of people with experience of mental illness to obtain their accounts of discrimination. The survey was designed to elicit their experiences of discrimination across a broad spectrum of activities as part of the New Zealand *Like Minds, Like Mine* anti-discrimination campaign. The information gathering for this work took place from April to June 2003.

This document aims to give policy makers, service providers and educators an insight into the discrimination experienced by people with experience of mental illness. For people with experience of mental illness and their supporters this document is intended as an acknowledgement of their experiences.

Survey respondents were asked to comment on their experiences of discrimination across a broad range of situations which included:

- **employment**
- **education and training**
- **housing**
- **mental health services and other health services**
- **government agencies and local government services**
- **banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions**
- **sports clubs and other organised activities**
- **parenting**
- **friends and family**
- **community harassment**
- **fear of discrimination**



## The main results of the survey showed:

- People report discrimination in all aspects of their lives from employment and housing to discrimination from friends and family and the community. This discrimination results in people feeling excluded from many activities of daily living. Few formal complaints about discrimination are made.

- Discrimination, even when it occurred several years ago, makes a lasting impression and still impacts on people's lives today. Due to past experiences of discrimination, many people seem to attribute any poor service they receive as discrimination due to their experience of mental illness.

- The fear of discrimination (often based on past experience) is as crippling as discrimination itself. Fear of discrimination prevents people from undertaking many activities in their lives such as employment and interacting with others.

- Disclosure is an issue across all the areas of discrimination. When people disclose that they have experience of mental illness they are treated differently (often negatively) from when they do not.

- People tend to believe and act on the common stereotypes of people with experience of mental illness as being incompetent or dangerous.

- We all need (at an individual, community and systemic level) to take responsibility for discrimination and examine our own behaviours and attitudes.