



Fears are misplaced

The article in the *Waikato Times* (January 22) "Murder sparks info call" about a Hamilton city councillor calling for neighbours to be informed if they are living next door to people with mental health problems is extremely disheartening.

As shown in research for the Health Ministry's Like Minds, Like Mine programme, 89 per cent of New Zealanders surveyed agreed they wanted to be as supportive as possible to people with mental illness.

Part of this support includes allowing treatment for mental illness to occur in natural settings where people can begin their recovery journey without feeling singled out by their communities, of which they are fully entitled to be a part.

The councillor's suggestion is also highly impractical. One in five New Zealanders in any one year will experience mental illness, and mental illness can happen to anyone at any time.

This means that, should Roger Hennebry's advice be adhered to, everyone in the country is likely to be told they have neighbours who have experienced a mental health problem. In addition, fears for the safety of children in the area are misplaced and can be an example of the misunderstanding and stigma associated with mental illness and the discrimination still faced by those who experience it. (Abridged)

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In the community: The scene at Frankton, Hamilton, where a woman died last week.