

## **Mahinarangi Tocker – a great loss to New Zealand**

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“The sudden death today of singer, songwriter and mental health advocate Mahinarangi Tocker is a great loss to New Zealand,” says Mental Health Foundation Chief Executive, Judi Clements.

“Mahinarangi, who died following a severe asthma attack, was employed at the Foundation as a Like Minds, Like Mine Project Worker, and was a greatly valued, hugely talented and much loved member of our organisation,” said Ms Clements.

Mahina, as she was known to many, first came to the Like Minds, Like Mine programme in 2001 when she featured along with Don Selwyn, Denise L’Estrange Corbet and other famous New Zealand faces in the first Like Minds TV ads and her song ‘*When I grow up*’ was the music associated with the TV campaign’s second series of advertisements.

“Mahina was identified early on in the campaign as someone famous who was prepared to speak openly about mental illness,” says Ms Clements. “Her bravery in agreeing to be one of the public faces of the campaign to counter stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness, and her honesty and openness in discussing her own mental health issues, and the strategies she employed to address them are reflective of the way she approached life on all levels.”

“Mahina brought a wealth of knowledge and understanding to her role within the Foundation. She had a quirky sense of humour, an indomitable spirit and was a shining example of someone who was actively living a recovery focused lifestyle.”

“She had low times”, says Ms Clements, “which gave her empathy and understanding for what others were going through and what people with experience of mental illness deal with, so her message of recovery was always well received.”

She was a true friend to us all.

Although she remained determinedly modest about her achievements, Mahina's accomplishments were many and varied and she was a great inspiration to all those around her.

Mahina always said: "Music making and word play is a huge part of my everyday life and the safest therapy for me to immerse myself in as a way to wear my experiences of mental distress."

Mahina also said, "I love how music can create self-understanding and therefore lead to kinder communication with people who come into my life."

Her achievements in music, her commitment to young people and her advocacy for the rights of people with mental health problems will be the lasting legacy of a great lady and a great New Zealander.

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**Additional Information**

Over the past 25-years, Mahina had written more than 600 songs, released seven albums, completed three books of poetry and many short stories, featured in a TV documentary *Sticks and Stones* and starred in one independent film, *A Small Life*, for which she received the best actress award at the 2002 Karachi Film Festival.

Mahina was a founding trustee of the New Zealand Music Industry Commission Te Reo Reka o Aotearoa and a member of the composers' advisory panel of Sounz, the Centre for New Zealand Music. She was involved in *Duffy Books In Homes* projects and was an adult literacy tutor.

In 1999, she began mentoring young people in music workshops that encouraged their interest and enjoyment in creativity as a way of raising their self-esteem.

Most recently, she was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's New Year Honours 2008, for her services to music.



Mahinarangi Tocker - pictured performing at the Like Minds, Like Mine National Plan launch in Wellington, November 2007.