



Thrive

Your impact on the future of
New Zealand whānau | Autumn 2026



whānau āwhina
plunket

Kia ora,

It's a tough time out there at the moment. Between frequent severe weather alerts and rising petrol prices, families are feeling the squeeze.

This is especially true of whānau in rural communities, who rely on their vehicles to run their farms or to get into town when needed – often a journey of an hour or more depending on how remote their home is. That's why my teams in rural Aotearoa work hard to either meet families where they are, or make sure they know how to access virtual appointments and our 24/7 PlunketLine video and phone support line. Those varied options are crucial and made possible thanks to support from people like you.

In this issue of *Thrive*, we focus on our rural communities and how we help them, with a great spotlight on nurse Leone who really understands life on the farm! We also update you on the whānau in our recent appeal, Jess and Daniel and their little lad Lachie. We honour an amazing Plunket nurse whose legacy will live on through Plunket's mahi in Christchurch thanks to a generous gift from her nephew made in her name. And we also update you on other things what we've been up to from Polyfest to Round the Bays, to welcoming our Canadian counterparts for a visit, or to improving the ways we truly build relationships with the whānau we see.

And of course, I'm excited to say that early registrations for September's *Dunk it for Plunket* are open! Last year I did a 'bungy dunk' off the Auckland Harbour Bridge with our partner, Arnott's Managing Director, Mike Cullerne. Together, we smashed our fundraising goals – seems a lot of people really wanted to see us do it! I don't know what my challenge will be this year, but it's always a fantastic feeling knowing that I'm part of a community of avid Dunkers (fundraisers) for such a brilliant cause.

Ngā mihi nui,

Fiona Kingsford, Chief Executive.

P.S: It's Mother's Day this weekend. Last year, I shared the wonderful news that I became a proud kuia (grandmother) with the arrival of my first mokopuna (grandchild), Monty. He has grown so much since that newsletter, and I feel grateful to watch him experience this beautiful country we live in and connect with the wonderful people in it. If you're honouring a special wahine in your life this weekend, or perhaps being spoiled yourself, enjoy ♥



Thank you for your help this March

We are so grateful for the support we received this tax season.

We had a goal of \$90,000 to keep our wraparound care for whānau going strong. But with your help, we were able to raise nearly \$108,000. This is unbelievably helpful in the year ahead so that we can support parents like Jess through programmes such as the Plunket Perinatal Adjustment Programme (PPNAP), or plan ways to help depending on the changing needs of tamariki and their families.

When we visited Jess and Daniel in their home, we chatted about the very real support that these new parents received in the early days with premature-born baby Lachlan and when Jess's mental health took a turn for the worse. It's an emotional story that many have connected with – and that included our photographer on set, Stacey.

In that lovely way that New Zealand often has of connecting people together through friendship circles or shared experiences, it turns out that Stacey had also benefitted from PPNAP.

“Jess's story really resonated with me,” she says. “My youngest had a heart condition, and following my first pregnancy I became very unwell and spent a long time in hospital. I carried a lot of trauma from my pregnancy and birth experience, and PPNAP was absolutely amazing in helping me process that and come to terms with mourning the pregnancies and births I had hoped for.

“Because of that, I feel incredibly honoured to have been involved in capturing such a meaningful story.”

It's amazing to see how Plunket's services are making such impactful, tangible changes for parents in our communities.



Jess, Daniel and little Lachie are doing well.



Stacey, our photographer with her family

“Shut the gate behind you!”: a spotlight on our teams and services in rural Aotearoa

Raising tamariki in rural Aotearoa comes with unique challenges. Plunket kaimahi (staff) and volunteers work hard to ensure many of our services are available to whānau day and night, and wherever they may be. That includes farms and small or remote towns, even if there isn't a brick-and-mortar Plunket clinic nearby. [Serving our rural communities is a priority for Plunket.](#)

“Working in a rural area like Dargaville (Northland) is very rewarding, but also has its challenges,” says Plunket nurse, Maryann Mckinley. “Isolation is a big problem for new parents in rural communities, and sometimes poverty is too.”

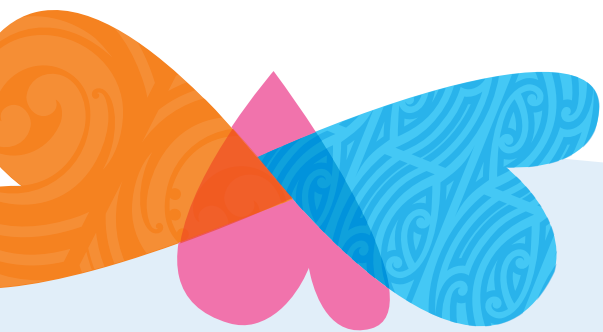
Whānau that live quite remotely may travel into their closest town only once a week at most to access things like health care, as it can be a big cost to travel that far or they may be busy running farms. But their town day may not coincide with Plunket Dargaville's clinic day, for example. That means in-home visits are important and offering flexible services like virtual appointments and phone support to fit around rural – and hectic – lives.

Plunket Nurses like to see families in their home for their first Well Child check for starters, but also for appointments beyond that initial meeting if it suits. “It provides us with a really good feel for how the whānau is coping on their parenting journey and especially if they are facing isolation, financial challenges or transportation issues,” says Maryann. And while that does mean that Maryann is often spending a lot of time on the road – driving up to an hour north, south or east of her base of Dargaville – she really gets to know her families and understands their lifestyles. “For some whānau who are dairy farming, I can suggest an appointment later in the day after they've fed the calves, or because it's the busy lambing season.”

Fellow rural Plunket Nurse, Leone House, is just as familiar with the busy schedules of farmers and the unique challenges the landscape can offer! “I may have to go up long driveways, tanker tracks and metal or just dirt tracks. I might have to deal with cows, bulls, sheep, peacocks, chickens, dogs, cats, and I have been in a house with pet rats. So having some sense with dealing with livestock helps!” she laughs.

As a result, Leone has a couple of extra tools in her nursing kete (toolkit), like a four-wheel drive vehicle and an ability to wrangle stock if needed.

Working with families in the Te Kauwhata/Huntly area, Leone often travels more than 1,000 kilometres a month to reach rural whānau, so those last two tools come in handy.



“I can go from seeing whānau in the village of Te Kauwhata or the town of Huntly to the back-blocks of rural New Zealand,” Leone says. “I may have to open and close gates to get to dwellings – I say dwellings as I can be at a house, tiny home, converted barn or anything in between.

After nearly nine years on the country beat, and as a dairy farmer’s daughter herself, Leone says it is a privilege to support rural whānau on their parenting journey. “I love it. Rural pēpi, māmā and whānau are so resilient... they run playgroups and get together to support each other, they are so resourceful and welcoming.”

Leone also visits new migrant māmā with little or no English. “They don’t drive and they can be very isolated due to not having any family or friends in NZ,” she says. “Often a Plunket nurse or kaiāwhina visit is a highlight of their day.”

Aside from the option of getting their Well Child checks done through virtual appointments, Nurses like Maryann and Leone make sure their rural families know that they can access Plunket 24/7 through PlunketLine, our phone and video service. It’s helpful for parenting advice and real-time support from a registered Plunket nurse for things like breastfeeding or baby sleep. And when it is a ‘town day’ for a family, Plunket’s playgroups and parent groups offer connections with other whānau to offset life on the farm.

If you know a whānau who lives in a rural or isolated part of Aotearoa, please feel free to share our list of services that help ensure they receive the wraparound care they need in those early years with tamariki.

Our Services

And if you’re visiting yourself, Leone has one parting piece of advice:

“Always remember to close the gate behind you!”



Shutting the gate before starting your appointment with a farming whānau is key – unless you want a four-legged dairy queen coming along for your next one!



Left: As well as getting support from PPNAP for Jess’s mental health, the rural South Canterbury family also appreciated being able to text their Plunket nurse and enjoyed her visits out to the farm.

Right: Well-equipped Nurse Maryann arriving at a rural home.



Leone is a proud Plunket nurse serving rural communities and with a farming background herself.



A special gift in memory of Plunket nurse, Margaret Anderson.

Some Plunket journeys really do span decades and impact generations.

We were grateful to hear from a supporter recently, Tim Bayley, in Nelson. He was reaching out to let us know that he wanted to make a donation in memory of his aunt, Margaret Anderson, who had passed away just a few weeks shy of her 104th birthday. He shared that his Aunt Meg was the Head Plunket Nurse in Christchurch for many years. After training to be a nurse in the 1940s and spending time in Norway to help rebuild after the Second World War, Meg returned to New Zealand and worked for Plunket in the 1970s and 80s. She filled that role proudly and for a long time before retiring.

Meg loved her community. She supported many local charities and gave as much of her time as she could, including volunteering at the Cathedral before the earthquake tragedy.

Above all though, she loved babies. “She lived a frugal lifestyle but donated to a lot of good causes,” Tim reflected, “but this gift will be an apt way to acknowledge her care for tamariki.”

We are grateful for this gift from Tim in memory of his beloved Aunt Meg, which will directly support our community services in Christchurch.

You can find out more about donating in memory of a loved one or including a gift in your Will by contacting our **Philanthropy Manager, Loren O’Sullivan** at philanthropy@plunket.org.nz



Left: Margaret (Meg) Anderson, as a nurse-in-training during the 1940s.

Right: Doting on a beloved baby seaside in later years.

Tamariki Tidbits:

Did you know that by the age of three, a preschooler’s brain is roughly 80% of the weight of an adult brain?



That doesn’t mean they’re quite ready for their first job or to drive a car, but it certainly explains the near-daily changes in their ability to chat, run and play!

A special shout-out to our partner, Stones Bins.

If you’ve ever been out for a stroll around the Canterbury or Selwyn region and spotted a big blue bin proudly adorning the Plunket logo like the one below, you’ll have seen a marker of our fantastic twenty-year partnership with Stones Fabric Industries.

Stones owns these 40 brightly-coloured clothing bins. The clothing that tumbles into each them is then sold at Toff’s Recycled Clothing Warehouse in Christchurch.

Each bin that’s placed translates into a donation to Plunket, directly supporting our local services. So if you know of a suitable location for a clothing bin in the Canterbury and Selwyn areas, get in touch: plunketbin@gmail.com.

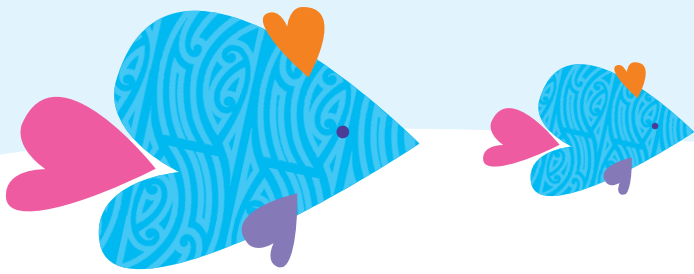
And if you have any wearable to donate, keep an eye out for a big blue Plunket bin!



Words from whānau that you help by supporting Plunket:

“It actually wasn’t about me, I shared with my Plunket nurse I was worried about a friend with a baby the same age and she provided me with a range of support options I could give to them, and all sorts of helpful info. And it was nice to know the support wasn’t just about me.”





Round the Bays 2026 – three cities and loads of fun!

A huge thanks to everyone who walked/ran or wheeled their way along a Round the Bays course in February and March! Some of our athletic staff enjoyed the Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland events. Together, we raised a fantastic \$4,374 which was a big step up from last year's tally (pun intended!).

Looking for your next fundraising event challenge? *Dunk it for Plunket* will be back this September! It may feel like a long way a way, but it's never too early to sign up and start planning to dunk a bikkie or three – or dunking anything you like – to help us keep being there for tamariki.



We had a fantastic turnout of athletes and fundraisers for the three Round the Bays events this year, including these wonderful Plunket team members!



I want to Dunk it for Plunket in September!

Other Plunket news from across the motu (from late Oct, Nov, Dec & Jan)

♥ In March, we were proud to be present at another Polyfest 2026 in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Our kaimahi (staff) welcomed more than 1,800 whānau to our stall, providing accessible support, building trust, and strengthening our visibility within Pacific communities. Families could also find welcome shade, reset, and care for their pēpi. At one point, our entire space was occupied by fathers caring for their babies, a powerful reflection of the role of fathers within our communities.



Plunket Nurse Keli and an excited tamariki visiting our stall at Polyfest.

♥ The generosity of the Hamilton community was made clear recently, with the final results from the Chartwell Shopping Centre's annual Christmas gift wrapping service coming in: nearly \$16,000 raised in support of Plunket! Chartwell Shopping Centre's Marketing Manager, Linda Jackson says the service, made up of 50+ gift wrappers (Plunket volunteers and Chartwell staff) reflects the spirit of the local community.

♥ In February we welcomed some Canadian friends to our Wellington office! Three organisations led by Mothercraft Canada, our Well Child service equivalents, joined us to discuss our similar mahi. Mothercraft, Family Day and Today's Family share our same focus on the health and well being of children, and we talked specifically about virtual care with our PlunketLine service and what it means to deliver that kind of 24/7 help to caregivers in our changing world. One of the organisations, Mothercraft, was actually established by a New Zealander in 1931 – Barbara Mackenzie, nurse and midwife, along with her husband, Irving Robertson, who was Chairman of the Board for the Hospital for Sick Children (now Sick Kids) in Toronto.

♥ You may have heard over the last couple of years about our focus on making sure that engaging with the whānau we care for is as much a focus as the services we deliver. How we show up, how we listen and how we build trust and relationships with caregivers and the little lives in their care is crucial. This model of practice is called Mahi Ngātahi Aotearoa, and we are rolling out relevant training to all of our kaimahi. Over the past three months alone, 733 staff attended a specific course, FAN training (made possible by a generous donor). We want – need – to make sure whānau feel included and culturally safe during their journey with Plunket.

Donate

If you would like more detail about these news stories, please contact the Fundraising team supporters@plunket.org.nz or call 0800 20 55 55



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