

Whānau Āwhina Plunket opens new community hub in Rotorua

Whānau Āwhina Plunket has today opened a new whānau-friendly one-stop shop community hub in Rotorua made possible by generous support from organisations and fundraising efforts from locals.

Plunket staff and Trustees including Board Chairperson Dame Fran Wilde gathered alongside building partner Generation Homes and dignitaries from local iwi for a dawn karakia led by Dr Anaha Hiini from Ngāti Whakaue to officially open the facility at 1436 Pukuatua Street.

With support from Ngāti Whakaue the community hub has been named ***Ria Mere – Mauri Tū Mauri Hono***. The name honours the two highly respected midwives and healers Ria Tikini and Mere Harper from the small coastal town of Karitāne near Ōtepoti - Dunedin, who are at the heart of Whānau Āwhina Plunket's whakapapa. Mauri Tū, Mauri Hono represents the enduring and binding spiritual essence of these two kuia who worked tirelessly in their era to improve the health of tamariki.

Whānau Āwhina Plunket Chief Executive Fiona Kingsford says the vision for the community hub for whānau with tamariki under-five began some 10 years ago when Plunket was spread across six locations.

“This facility brings all our support services under one roof. Plus, there is space for like-minded community providers who share our vision of supporting whānau in the crucial early years, so tamariki get the best start in life.

“For generations Plunket nurses and the wider team have walked alongside Rotorua whānau raising their tamariki. We are committed to continue on this path and look forward to working more closely with other health and support services.”

Mrs Kingsford says as a charity we would never have got to this point without several years of fundraising from friends of Plunket and ongoing financial support from organisations and individuals.

“We are truly grateful for the support we have received from Generation Homes, Bay Trust, Rotorua Trust, New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, One Foundation, New Zealand Community Trust, Gallagher Insurance, Masfen Foundation, NXP, Plunket Foundation, Rotorua Rotary Club, Rotorua Racing Club, Rotorua Quota, Claymark, Placemakers Rotorua, Panasonic NZ and the many friends of Plunket who have held many fundraising initiatives over the years from degustation dinners to cake raffles.”

Plunket partnered with Generation Homes to build the community hub, replacing the 1950s building on the same site which was proving too costly to maintain and heat, and was no longer fit for purpose.

Generation Homes Managing Director Paul Marshall says working with Whānau Āwhina Plunket Property Manager Lindsay Seddon and the team to reimagine their community hub has been a truly rewarding experience.



“By demolishing the old rooms, this allowed us to create a centre that maximises the use of the site, providing a new building with a range of outdoor and indoor spaces to offer flexibility of use. The building is future proofed to provide a comfortable and safe environment for the Whānau Āwhina Plunket team, pēpi, tamariki and their whānau.”

Around 60 percent of babies born in Te Whatu Ora Lakes (formerly Lakes DHB) district are currently enrolled with Whānau Āwhina Plunket. The Rotorua team sees around 500 pēpi each year and supports the whānau of just over 2,600 tamariki under-five.

Clinical Leader Alison Craig says the team is looking forward to welcoming families to the new facility.

“The first drop-in clinic at 1436 Pukuatua Street will be held tomorrow (Thursday 1 February) from 9am-2pm. Parents and caregivers who may have missed out on a Plunket checkup for tamariki under-five can call in – no appointment is necessary.

“Any families with tamariki under-five or expecting mums are welcome to come in tomorrow as well from 10-2pm to take a look around. Our Plunket nurses, kaiāwhina, community Karitāne, community services co-ordinator and the wider team will be ready and waiting.”

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Photo caption: Whānau Āwhina Plunket kaiāwhina Cindy Te Rehu-Tuki (left) with new parents Te rina Tahuri and Dallas James, and their newborn son Modecai James



Photo caption: Outside the new Whānau Āwhina Plunket community hub in Rotorua following a pōwhiri

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About Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Pēpi, tamariki and whānau are at the heart of Whānau Āwhina Plunket. The charity is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest health and wellbeing support service for tamariki – seeing around 290,000 under-fives. About 80% of newborns are enrolled with Whānau Āwhina Plunket each year.

Our nurses provide clinical assessments, and along with Kaiāwhina and Community Karitāne, support whānau and families, through home and clinic visits, as well as PlunketLine 0800 933 922, a free 24/7 telephone advice service for parents.

Our website plunket.org.nz is one of the country's most widely read digital child health resources, with 1.8 million visits each year. It is available data-free through the Zero Data portal at zero.govt.nz, and you can choose to view it in English or te reo Māori.