

Outgoing Whānau Āwhina Plunket board member Amohaere Tangitu thanked for service

Whānau Āwhina Plunket is crediting outgoing board member Amohaere Tangitu for her integral role in making sure the organisation prioritises the needs of whānau Māori.

Ms Tangitu recently left the board after a six-year term following the launch of Whānau Āwhina Plunket's new 2021-2026 strategy, which reaffirms the organisation's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Whānau Āwhina Plunket Board Chair Dame Fran Wilde says Ms Tangitu's knowledge, experience and leadership was invaluable during her time on the board, as was her input into a strategy that commits to delivering equitable outcomes for Māori, Pasifika and other families who the health system has poorly served.

"We've been so honoured and privileged to have Amohaere's expertise and guidance," says Dame Wilde.

"She has truly shaped the way we think about Whānau Āwhina Plunket's services, and this is reflected in our new strategy that puts a commitment to pro-equity at the core of what we do."

Chief Executive Amanda Malu echoes these thoughts.

"Amohaere has been instrumental in shaping our kaupapa now and in the future, and I can't thank her enough for her warmth, her insights and her passion for making things better for all pēpi and tamariki in Aotearoa," says Ms Malu.

Mother to six, grandmother to 17 and great-grandmother to 17, Ms Tangitu's tamariki and mokopuna were Whānau Āwhina Plunket babies – and she has seen a lot of changes to the organisation over the years.

"Plunket was seen as a very middle-class organisation in the 60s," recalls Ms Tangitu.

"I told my Plunket nurse to go away seven times. I didn't want her to visit me because she wasn't Māori. But she kept coming back."

From these shaky beginnings, the two forged a relationship that would give her nurse insights into how the health system treated whānau Māori, and set Ms Tangitu on the path to becoming a Whānau Āwhina Plunket board member nearly five decades later.

“I only opened up when I started to trust her, which took a while. I shared a lot with my nurse about what it was like for us. She saw the hospital staff and their attitude towards me. They didn’t make any effort to pronounce my name correctly,” she says.

“She hadn’t really thought about how important our culture is to us, how that helps with what we’re going through. She realised there was more she had to learn.”

From there on the nurse visited regularly.

“I became really comfortable with her coming in and started to look forward to it. She was there for me. That changed my outlook on the organisation as I felt safe.”

Ms Tangitu joined the Whānau Āwhina Plunket board to drive responsiveness to Māori from the governance level.

“My intent in joining the board was to bring a Māori voice to the table,” she says.

“I was very clear that I didn’t represent all Māori and they had to get that right, and look at extending the relationship with Māori across the motu.”

Ms Tangitu is confident the new strategy will help Whānau Āwhina Plunket continue its work to deliver services equitably by 2025.

“Our new strategy is the voice of the people. Whānau Āwhina Plunket now has a better understanding of what’s needed to deliver services to our community.

“But even though we have a strategy, there’s still a lot of work to be done. We have to make sure we’re making a meaningful difference and change Māori health statistics.”

Ms Tangitu says she has been very privileged to serve on the Whānau Āwhina Plunket board.

“I know that the journey Whānau Āwhina Plunket has embarked on requires everyone’s attention and commitment.

“I leave Whānau Āwhina Plunket with this whakataukī: *Rapua te huarahi whānui i runga i te whakaaro ko tahi* – seek the pathway in unity and you will achieve the common goal of reducing health disparities.”

Amohaere Tangitu has been in the health sector for more than three decades. She began her career as a nurse aide in Kawerau Maternity Hospital in the 1960s. She has since been an influential member of the Māori health community. She worked as the Director of Regional Māori Health Services, Bay of Plenty District Health Board, and continues to participate on a number of Health Boards and her Iwi Trust Board.

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to Māori health development, the title of Distinguished Fellow – Māori Health Sciences (Nursing) was bestowed upon Amohaere Tangitu by Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi.

ENDS

For more information contact: Rachel Schicker, Senior Communications Advisor, 027 252 4178