

Whānau Āwhina Plunket celebrates International Nurses' Day and 114 years of helping kiwi families

Whānau Āwhina Plunket is celebrating two special occasions this month – International Nurses' Day and the charity's 114th birthday.

Chief Executive Amanda Malu said Aotearoa has changed a lot since The Society for the Promotion of the Health of Women and Children was founded in 1907, but Whānau Āwhina Plunket's services are still a valued and vital support for parents.

“Whānau Āwhina Plunket Nurses have been walking alongside Kiwi families for 114 years. We've had the privilege of being invited into the homes of families and whānau across the country and touched the lives of hundreds of thousands – quite possibly millions – of babies,” Ms Malu said.

“While the way we work with families and whānau has changed enormously over the past 114 years, one thing hasn't – our nurses' dedication to ensuring in the first 1000 days we make the difference of a lifetime.”

Ms Malu said so many New Zealanders are 'Plunket babies', it's become part of the Kiwi vernacular.

“Whānau Āwhina Plunket is uniquely New Zealand. Our specially trained nurses provide support to parents on childcare and parenting, and regularly assess the health and development of children from birth up to the age of five,” Ms Malu said.

“But there's much more to our nurses' role than making sure our pēpi are healthy. Our nurses also help families and whānau connect within their communities to reduce isolation and build whanaungatanga.

“Our 114th birthday and International Nurses' Day are two fantastic reasons to celebrate nurses, who've been helping whānau for generations.”

This year's International Nurses' Day theme is 'Nurses: A Voice to Lead' and the sub-theme is 'A Vision for Future Healthcare' – concepts Chief Nurse Dr Jane O'Malley said Whānau Āwhina Plunket nurses put into practise every day.

“Because nurses are welcomed into homes and communities, they are ideally placed to lead innovations in healthcare into the future. They have first-hand knowledge of the joys and challenges whānau face in caring for pēpi and tamariki and can play a key role in delivering Whānau Āwhina Plunket's vision of equity for all,” Dr O'Malley said.

“A prime example of this is how we delivered our services when New Zealand went in the first COVID-19 lockdown last year and our usual in-person visits were no longer an option.

“We quickly established telephone and video consultations for our Well Child Tamariki Ora services, which allowed us to continue to deliver our services to thousands whānau. Our nurses were instrumental in leading this innovation.”

Dr O’Malley said almost all whānau who responded felt respected and listened to and trusted the organisation’s advice during the COVID-19 lockdown period. They said the nurses answered their questions on child health and around 70 per cent of whānau said Whānau Āwhina Plunket answered questions on their own health needs. The evaluation report is available [here](#)

“This is a testament to how nurses have led the way in adapting our services to best meet our communities’ needs, and their warmth, resilience and flexibility as they reach out to our whānau and families,” said Dr O’Malley.

“Whānau Āwhina Plunket’s nurses are the backbone of our organisation. They have been with us on our journey for more than a century, and they continue to shape Whānau Āwhina Plunket’s future. Today is about thanking them.”

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