

# Hon Tariana Turia

## Minister of Whānau Ora

Friday 23 November 2012



**SPEECH**

### **Te Anga Mua – Whānau Ora Research Seminar Te Raukura – Te Wharewaka o Poneke – Wellington “Working together to give a voice to whānau experiences”**

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi o te motu tena koutou katoa.

I want to thank Community Research and in particular the tangata whenua committee, for inviting me to this special event today, to launch the Whānau Ora Research Website.

This is the third of three fabulous days that I have had, in which we have been immersed in the spirit of transformation we know to be Whānau Ora.

It has been a time of great sunshine, of laughter; of tears; of challenge; of conversation; food for the soul and some pretty good kai for the puku as well! And through it all the kōrero has been rich and grounded in the everyday experience of whānau.

One of the ideas that came up in talking about Whānau Ora as an integrated model of development spread experienced in economic, social and cultural dimensions was the need to ensure that environmental dimensions were also integral to our progress.

And so I've been looking at this venue – which is actually an ideal environment for considering the relevance of context to our sense of wellbeing. We have the perfect collusion of three central elements of te ao Maori – the whare; the waka; and the raukura.

Thirty years ago this year - Professor Sir Mason Durie first gifted the nation, the

model of Te Whare Tapa Wha. Te taha hinengaro (psychological health); te taha wairua (spiritual health); te taha tinana (physical health); and te taha whānau (family health). These four dimensions are represented by the four walls of a house - each wall necessary to the strength and symmetry of the building.

With the **waka** – I have been thinking of **Ngā Vaka o Kainga Tapu** - a conceptual framework for addressing family violence in seven Pacific communities; informed by, and aligned with, seven ethnic specific conceptual frameworks.

And when I think of **Te Raukura**, I think of the interpretation Tuwhakairiora Williams shared with the health sector that Te Raukura means the feather or plume traditionally worn by people of rank and mana. People of rank and mana reflect leadership, hope, aspiration and the achievement of a common vision for all. Te Raukura also symbolises pride and inner strength.

And in this instance, it connects us to Te Maunga Tитоhea, Taranaki and to Parihaka and Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi.

All of these three concepts combine to make an ideal environment for change, a framework for the future driven by our worldviews.

Each of us could share our own unique stories of what the whare, the waka and the raukura mean to us – we would have tribal interpretations; ancestral histories that arise every time those symbols are highlighted in our lives.

These stories will have their origins in Te Moana nui a Kiwa; as much as in Aotearoa. They will tell us of a common and shared history; and of specialised, distinctive histories known to our own. We will have experiences of collective effort - the bringing together of expertise across the community to carve the waka; to build the house.

These symbols connect us to a time when our navigational talents were tested to the fore – when we were guided by the constellations of the stars; when our planting and our harvesting was determined by our ability to read our environment.

In those days we weren't risk averse – we took risks; guided by our faith; our

belief in ourselves. And guess what – we landed on firm shores; and we are still here – surviving and thriving.

This is what today is about: the stories that are the springboards for our success? How do we as agencies, providers, researchers give voice to these experiences and build on the strengths, resources and skills that we develop along the way?

This form of collaboration is important to me. It is what Whānau Ora is all about: agencies, providers, researchers, communities and the whānau coming together to advance their own aspirations, their own values and cultural contexts, and ways of doing and being.

It is about working with whānau to enable them to be self-determining. Whānau Ora must place whānau at the centre – ensuring whānau can make the best, informed decisions and lead their own journey in the way they best determine for themselves. Sometimes that is not easy to allow to happen but it is the way it has to happen.

This is not about funding streams; it is not about structures – what it is about is survival on our terms. It is about real outcomes that have been driven by whānau.

I want to acknowledge the Whānau Ora Taskforce - Professor Sir Mason Durie; Rob Cooper; Suzanne Snively, Di Grennell and Nancy Tuaine. The vision in the 2010 report set a strong foundation for Whānau Ora to be driven by whānau outcomes.

And I want to refresh our memories with a statement the Taskforce made in the foreword that launched that report.

That statement was:

*“if there is a single conclusion to our deliberations it is that the potential within whānau has never been greater and unleashing that potential will not only bring benefits to Maori but will add greatly to the nation and to the prospects of future generations”.*

I believe that one of the most exciting elements in the last few days has been hearing the statement over and over again – that whānau are a source of strength for the New Zealand economy.

Merepeka Raukawa-Tait made a statement that resonated with me. In one of her korero with whānau she told them that they were absolutely important to the future of our nation. One of the women replied – *Me? But I'm on the benefit – how can that be?*

Merepeka's answer was – we are focussed on potential – this is about investing in our nationhood – and your contribution is equally important as mine. And she talked about the lights coming on – that self-belief, that desire that they can indeed contribute and shape our collective future.

I think it's really important to remind ourselves that Whānau Ora starts from a position of strength. It was never envisaged to be a checklist to fix the problems of the world. Its intentions were to do all that we can, to ensure whānau can be the best that they can be, to be orientated towards a productive and constructive future.

I have no appetite for the self-defeating pessimism of press releases alleging that Whānau Ora is hurting New Zealanders or a waste of taxpayer funding.

But you know what - whānau are taxpayers too – and what we know is that all New Zealanders benefit from the relationships, the connections and the capability which help our whānau to flourish.

I am reminded of the lyrics of that Kora waiata:

*Poly poly poly politician Can you make a right decision for all of us You can talk the talk - But will you walk the walk Will you bring us comfort?*

Politicians sitting on the side-lines and throwing stones don't bring comfort, they don't bring security, they don't bring care to the people.

And I include myself in that category as a politician. Too often we focus on what is political instead of what we know is right.

As far as I'm concerned, whānau are the best ones to tell us whether Whānau Ora is working for them – because their stories count.

And your stories are showing us that Whānau Ora is all about the outcomes - outcomes related to whānau capability.

Whānau becoming self-managing, whānau living healthy lifestyles, whānau participating fully in society, whānau confidently participating in te ao Maori, whānau becoming financially secure and successfully involved in wealth creation, and whānau who are cohesive, resilient and nurturing.

And actually that's the majority of us. Sometimes we are in danger of thinking we are like the stories that the media are feeding us.

I want to acknowledge all of you here today, as members of the research community, for remaining committed and focused on promoting a Whānau Ora approach.

I want to also thank Professor Sir Mason Durie for remaining vigilant in his roles and reminding us that measurement is not just about counting interventions, or service changes.

We need to be constantly asking ourselves whether the changes have made a difference for whānau and whether as a result of their planning; we have families who are equipped with a wide range of capabilities necessary to sustain and stimulate Maori and Pasifika communities into the future.

But it is more than just about plans. It is about having faith; having self-belief; knowing we can; and having the courage to act.

As many of the action researchers working with providers and whānau are here today, I commend you on your ability to share technical and best practice support with each other. This gives whānau the opportunity to talk about their experiences in a safe way, sharing their strengths, dreams and achievements.

And may I say what you have to share is tremendously important.

Early findings paint a positive picture of whānau-led development and most importantly, whānau outcomes. But it is still early days, and there is much more work is required to broaden and deepen the evidence base in support of Whānau Ora.

We mustn't be fazed by the disproportionate scrutiny that certain sectors want to treat Whānau Ora to – we have been underneath the microscope before – and no doubt we will be again. But we have to know that everything we are doing is right and believe in that.

Deep change processes take time and there are ups and downs for every whānau. Whānau stories are often moving and exciting, but it is important that the sharing of these stories does not open up whānau to public scrutiny and criticism as we have seen.

I believe it is incumbent upon both politicians and the media alike, to use their power of persuasion responsibly. A breaking news story might be great for the political ego – but what are the impacts upon the whānau affiliated to the person who has been put under the spotlight?

A big challenge for you, as researchers, is communicating the good stories of whānau change without breaching the privacy of the whānau concerned.

A very real fear of whānau out there is the damage that the political clobbering machine can do to these whānau whose greatest crime is trying to make a difference in their lives.

In my maiden speech to Parliament I said that if Maori are the problem then we are also the solution. I believed that then as I do today. That we can and we will create our own future, filled with the promise our ancestors left for us.

I have no hesitation in saying that I am pleased with the progress that the various Whānau Ora provider collectives are making in transforming their services from a focus on individuals to the collective aspirations of whānau.

The approach of using navigators to support whānau as a group to set goals, and plan ways to get the help they need to achieve those goals, has been in many cases innovative and exciting.

It is also great to know that as whānau grow, plan, and act there is a sense of future-focused development. No programme, no service “fixes” whānau. But whānau can be supported and facilitated to be future focused; to be the best that they can be.

A recent and exciting development is a project that collected data from a number of Whānau Ora providers. The data reveals concrete evidence of positive whānau transformation.

This data from Whānau Ora providers shows that participating whānau had high levels of satisfaction with the support that they received. The research concludes that whānau planning is an effective mechanism for engaging whānau and strengthening their capacity, and that whānau aspirations are inter-related. But there are often complex and multi-dimensional barriers to achieving aspirations.

It is as if we've come a full circle, from setting the kaupapa of Whānau Ora, to researchers working alongside providers and whānau to give feedback on progress. We now need to use this rich information from whānau to guide the approach even wider.

So, just as it is important to capture and research whānau experiences in an appropriate way, access to their stories, tools, resources and information is equally as important.

And that is why I'm delighted to be able to launch the Whānau Ora research website. As community researchers you have an established and well-used website and networks with providers and whānau.

This provides the perfect platform to develop and manage tools, methodologies and good practices for whānau-centred research. The website will enable the full range of Whānau Ora stakeholders to access best practice examples, stories and experiences about how to recognise, facilitate and lead whānau in a safe environment that allows growth, development and healing.

I hope that researchers will use this website to share information, plans, toolkits, resources, reports, and lessons learnt. And as the action researchers working alongside providers and whānau begin reporting on outcomes, the website will be a good place to share, discuss and debate findings.

But what I am most excited about is the opportunities for whānau to share their experiences, if they wish to do so.

Finally, I'd like to commend and launch the Whānau Ora research website and wish the guardians of this website Community Research all the best in leading this exciting phase of Whānau Ora I'm confident that through working together, the voices of whānau will be heard and that this will lead to a better future for our families. It will, indeed, create and shape our new future, our new dawn, *Puao Te Ata Tu*.

**Ends**