

PreScribe

Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau Staff Magazine



Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Te Tai Tokerau

Ward 2 Christmas Wonderland
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From Interim Group Director Operations



Alex Pimm

Kia ora koutou,

As we head towards the end of 2023, I want to express how grateful I am to each of you for working so hard for the people of Te Tai Tokerau whilst managing the changes within Te Whatu Ora.

The end of the calendar year provides us with an opportunity to celebrate our achievements of the past 12 months. There have been lots – and far too many to mention here – including reducing our waiting lists, managing a busy winter period, improving our cancer waiting time performance, recruiting more people, opening new buildings and bringing care closer to home. We have so much to be proud of and I want to thank you all for your on-going mahi and dedication.

We have also implemented several initiatives to support our community and kaimahi, including the covered outdoor seating area on the grassed area on Hospital Road and additional bike parking at Whangārei Hospital, where 28 custom bike racks have been installed.

This year we signed an agreement with Aotearoa Clinical Trials to form a partnership to manage novel clinical trials based at Whangārei Hospital, with a Te Tai Tokerau office and clinics based in Maunu House, and the first Whangārei Hospital-based ACT team member, Ann-Marie Ford, started her role as Research Nurse/Coordinator in early November. This supplements our existing research team and brings more research opportunities to our district and our patients.

I want to congratulate our Communications Manager, Liz Inch, who was awarded the Public Service Commissioner's Commendation for Excellence, and all the nominees and winners at the recent Scientific Technical and Allied Health Recognition Awards celebrated in Te Tai Tokerau in late November.

Congratulations also go to the hugely successful Te Tai Tokerau Nursing Conference organisers and the Primary Care Diabetes Symposium.

I was delighted to hear about our success with our tobacco and vape "mystery shopping" operation, which you can read about in this issue and I hope that we can continue to work together to reduce smoking rates in our district.

You will also read the heartfelt story of a mother with two premature twins who were cared for in our special care baby unit (SCBU) and hear about a day in the life of a SCBU nurse. These stories are a great reminder of how important our work is and how much impact it has on the lives of so many whānau in Te Tai Tokerau.

The Holidays Act remediation project is progressing. Due to the complexities of the Holidays Act and the enormity of this work, remediation payments will likely be made in mid-2024 for Te Tai Tokerau staff. Thank you for being so patient, and thanks again to the local team working on this critical project. Early indications are that our payroll systems and processes have been paying the majority of people correctly so we won't need to make remediation payments to most people.

The clinical performance metrics for the April to June 2023 period were released by Te Whatu Ora recently and highlighted some areas we know need further focus on. Pleasingly we can also see improvements in areas where we have had concerted effort. These metrics only give us a snapshot of all the mahi we do – during 2024, we'll be working to develop more local quality, safety and performance reports for each directorate that reflects the measures that are important for each service.

It has been interesting seeing more national policies being developed recently. Over time, we expect policies to be nationalised, although this will take some time. I encourage everybody to provide feedback on these policies as they come out for consultation through the WhatSayYou online tool.

As we know, Northland is a holiday destination for many New Zealanders, especially over the summer. Te Tai Tokerau Hospital and Specialist Services, Commissioning and the National Public Health Service have teamed-up to support a communications campaign over the summer to help people find the right care for them, support mental health and wellbeing, and give relevant public health advice.

A huge thank you to those who are generously rostered over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

I hope every one of you gets some quality time with whānau, whether you're working or not, and get a break that's as restful, safe and enjoyable as possible.

I am sure that 2024 will bring us new challenges and opportunities. In the meantime, please celebrate the mahi of the past year.

Meri Kirihimete me te hape Nū Ia – Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Ngā mihi nui,

Alex Pimm

Interim Group Director Operations

Te Whatu Ora

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Te Tai Tokerau

The Gift of Community Kindness

Whangārei Hospital's Children's Ward Christmas Wonderland

Christmas arrived early at Whangārei Hospital's children's ward, thanks to a handful of joyful elves from the Northland community.

Following a post on social media calling for donations of Christmas decorations, Carina de Graaf, General Manager of The Northland Events Centre Trust, was eager to help.

Not only did the group generously purchase decorations to gift Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau, they also insisted on installing the festive lights as a gift to the hard-working staff and the deserving patients on the ward.

"Before lunch I asked who wanted to come with me to help decorate the children's ward and the whole team volunteered!" laughed Carina.

"We were looking at what we could do to help someone this season, so we were really excited when this opportunity came up," she said.

Clinical Nurse Manager, Judith Hapi shared that the offer was amazing.

"We did have some decorations up, but we ran short halfway down the ward. Our decorations were old too, so we really appreciate the help."

Judith said it was particularly nice for the community to be involved.

"Something like this, cheers the kids up at this time of year and creates an inviting place to be, if they need to be here in the holidays."

An enthusiastic group of staff offered to lend a hand hanging tinsel on the walls, as the flurry of Santas helpers got to work and children watched the magic unfold.

Six-year-old patient George Heapey was more than happy to get involved, decorating trees, and sharing his love of Christmas, as well as his eagerness to get back to school.

With enough lights left over to fill the nurse's station and the playroom, Ward 2 was quickly transformed into a Christmas wonderland, wrapped in the catchy sounds of laughter and joy.



George Heapey busily decorating the Ward 2 Xmas tree

Premature Twin Journey

Difficult To Put Into Words



Waiti River Pearl Stewart-Pepi and Waita Ocean Storm Stewart-Pepi when they were born

Amour Stewart, local Mother of premature twins, points out that it is hard to condense such an emotional roller coaster of a journey into a story, but she was happy to share her experience with us to help celebrate Prematurity Awareness Day.

Amour recognised that she would get quite moody when she is pregnant, and this time her overwhelming feelings had given it away.

"Hubby and I had been arguing so he came home from work with a pregnancy test. I took it the next morning. We found out I was pregnant just before he left for work. I was so excited," she says.

Unfortunately, Amour's pregnancy experience was not smooth sailing. Before she had tested positive, Amour was starting to get an upset tummy. During her previous pregnancy she had Hyperemesis Gravidarum, a severe form of morning sickness. The symptoms increased as the pregnancy progressed, vomiting every day until 17 weeks.

"They booked a scan to make sure everything was okay because of how sick I was. I remember lying on the bed looking at the screen. As soon as the sonographer put the thing on my tummy, two circles or holes popped up."

Amour had experienced a couple of miscarriages; one was at 18 weeks in May 2022. When they lost that baby, she had a strong feeling the next time she fell pregnant, that she would have twins.

She was still shocked when twins were confirmed.

"To be honest, now and then I still have a moment where I am like, I made two babies at the same time, I

have twins! Who thought I was that responsible?" she giggles.

At the 20 weeks scan they found out they were little boys.

The next scan, at 23 weeks they found out twin one (the baby closest to the exit now known as Waiti), had a low doppler meaning there was not enough blood flow to the placenta. So, he was not growing as well."

The next chapter began for Amour.

They booked a doppler scan the following week as Waiti hadn't grown very much.

"The maternal fetal health team in Auckland did a scan and basically said I would be in Auckland till the babies were born. I was injected with my first dose of steroids and told the hospital will ring me once they have my room on the ward.

We booked my husband Shane and 8-year-old daughter into the Ronald McDonald House, and I checked into the maternity ward," she recalls.

"I spent my time hanging with my family when they'd come up, I'd go with them for a walk to the domain, making friends with my roommates, getting scans, everything seemed to be okay. So, my family went home on day five."

Day 6, Waiti seemed like he was in distress, so they moved Amour to the delivery suite at about 9am that morning. She sat on a hard narrow bed, in the most uncomfortable position and wasn't allowed to move because Waiti was so little, and it was hard to pick up his heart rate.

By now Mum was 25 weeks and 4 days gestation.

"I rang Shane to come straight back down to Auckland, it was straight after Cyclone Gabriel had hit. He slept in the chair and was my voice when I felt unheard."

The next day, Wednesday 12 April, Amour had a doppler scan, nothing had changed, and they booked the big theatre. The nurse put a thick cannula into her tiny vein she remembers uncomfortably, and then pumped it with magnesium.

They got Waiti out at 11:45 am, weighing 490 grams.

Waita then arrived weighing 690 grams, exactly 200g heavier than Waiti.

Initially Waiti was on continuous positive airway pressure and Waita was ventilated.

"They were both so beautiful and precious. I cried when I saw them because they were so little and fragile, and everything was still on the brink of life. The boys went through a lot inside, both having the possibility of having cerebral palsy.

Waitā had a pneumothorax, meaning a collapsed lung. Both needed blood transfusions, the horrid eye tests and X-rays for things like being fed too fast, aspirating, being pumped full of oxygen and vomiting.”

“My Waitī was always choosing when to advance to the next stage of breathing, pulling at his continuous positive airway pressure.”

The biggest challenge for Amour, was only being able to see half of her family. It’s draining on your heart, soul and mental health she says, especially as a mother.

“You carry your children in your heart. They make up your heart. It’s like I had two families and two lives. It still triggers me to think about that.”

The boys were in the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) for 45 days and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for 80 days, 125 long days all together.

Every day in the first few weeks the family celebrated each milestone.

“We celebrated them moving breathing levels, moving up nappy sizes, sucking on dummies like they are trying to latch, their eye tests being okay, the times they got to be together, basically we celebrate each day with them because it is special.

But my biggest so far was when my daughter got to hold them for the first time, she was so protective and normally a bit shy, she went to kura the next day and did a big mihi in front of her kura about her baby brothers,” she remembers fondly.

“I also loved when they started breastfeeding, they took to the boob like pros – a proud moment after months of expressing.

“When pregnancy and natural birthing options were taken away from me again because of the emergency caesarean section, breastfeeding was something I wanted to do. I expressed every 2 hours for half an hour for ages.

Everyone said I was pumping too much – but I hadn’t pumped enough with my first girl and our breastfeeding journey was difficult. So, I expressed religiously, crying over missing pump times, it was exhausting. But when it came time to latch and feed, my boys didn’t have to try too hard. and they’ve been mostly breastfed.”

For the most part Amour and the twins had amazing care throughout.

“Most of the nurses showed me extra love and compassion. I remember freaking out at the transition from level 3 care to level 2 care, but those nurses showed us love by cuddling my boys during their tube feeds, making sure they were always warm, comfy, clean and matching.”

In Whangārei it was scary coming from Auckland back to here she says.



Older sibling Ngakaumahana Caskey Stewart-Pepi with her twin brothers

“The care is way different, it’s a different pace. It’s a very traumatic transition and something I think both NICU and SCBU should be made aware of, and perhaps spend time in each other’s spaces.”

But Whangārei was great she recalls, the nurses do their best under the circumstances.

“They advocate for us and our babies. The nurses and their support team, the health care assistants. They are amazing. They always got us extra food, they gave my family amazing care and tried their hardest to get my babies home.”

She says her advice for anyone going through a premature birth journey is make time to grieve everything you’re feeling. Don’t feel bad if you can’t make it up to your baby every day she says, and to make friends with the other parents.

“It really does lift your morale to talk to other people on the same position,” she points out.

“There’s this part of the journey when you’re forced out into a room with more people and you’ve been in hospital so long, you’re lonely, and you just start talking. You find friends. It makes the journey less lonely and more bearable.”

Now home, Amour says that the twins are doing really well.

Initially Waitī came home on a bit of oxygen but has been self-ventilating for about a month now.

“They have the funniest flat side heads that are proving hard to correct. But I’m so lucky. They sleep well, they breastfeed well, they are gaining weight, they babble and are so chill... for now,” laughs Mum.

A Day In The Life

Of A Special Care Baby Unit Nurse



India Judkins

India Judkins, Registered Nurse at Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau

When does your shift start? Day shift starts at 7am and night shift at 7pm. We generally do 12-hour shifts in Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU).

What is a typical morning routine for you? My typical morning routine would be to arrive at work at 6:30, make a coffee and read through the SCBU handover sheet with my colleagues. We then do patient allocations and then have a general chat with the team of nurses I am on shift with before we head into the unit for bedside handover.

What do your main duties entail? One of my main day-to-day duties is feeding. Feeding babies in SCBU isn't as simple as it would seem. It entails lots of education and support for mums in helping them breastfeed or bottle feed their baby. If the baby is unable to take oral feeds, then we give nasogastric feeds or intravenous nutrition. Feeding SCBU babies requires specialised assessment skills, knowledge, and patience to ensure our babies have a positive and safe feeding experience.

Other duties I perform on a typical day are hygiene and caring for our babies. Assessment of and care for babies on various forms of respiratory support, including oxygen therapy, High Flow, and CPAP. Administration of various types of medication. Liaising with other healthcare services that our babies may require and working within an MDT to ensure all the babies and their family's needs are met. Lots and lots of whānau support and education about what is happening for their baby in SCBU, how to care for them in SCBU, recognising their baby's cues and safe sleep, recognising signs of unwellness and CPR education.

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What is the favourite part of your day? My favourite part of my day is meeting new families that have had their baby admitted to SCBU or catching up with families I have already met about how their baby has been progressing since I was last at work. I love hearing families talk about the successes their baby has been having such as weight gains, feeding improvements and reductions in various medical supports.

What do you love about your job? It makes me feel so privileged to work in SCBU in these moments where I can see families grow confident in their care for their babies, and I encourage families to see even the smallest steps forward as a great win.

What are some of the challenges you face? One big challenge in SCBU is looking past the fact that the baby is a patient in a medical environment and remembering that they are also a baby that needs to have cuddles and positive sensory input and rides in a pram and stories read to them. When I am looking after an unwell baby, I have to rethink the care I provide to move away from the tasks I need to complete and make sure I am meeting their developmental needs also.

Lots of procedures and cares in SCBU are not positive for the baby as there is often noise and bright lights and painful procedures so it is really important for us to make sure there are lots of positive experiences and stimulus for the baby and whānau too.

Another challenge that is faced is providing culturally safe care in times when intense medical care is required for the baby. Cultural safety and whānau involvement are extremely important to us in SCBU.

We constantly work to build rapport with our families and put them at the forefront of their babies' care – I often tell them that they are the driver of their journey in SCBU. It is often a challenge in critical times to ensure we are being culturally safe when decisions are being made very quickly and care being needed just as quickly.

When finishing your shift, how do you wind down? If I have had a particular challenging shift, one of my ways to wind down is debriefing with my colleagues, or just having a general chat. I am very grateful to work with such a special and tight knit team of nurses. Not only do they offer me constant support in the unit, but they are also wonderful friends.

Share a memory that sums up why you do what you do: A memory that always resonates with me is the time I helped a long term Neonatal Intensive Care Unit/Special Care Baby Unit baby have a successful breastfeed for the first time – I will always remember the mum's face filled with joy. They had had such a long journey in hospital where the baby could not feed for a long time – it was a privilege to support mum and baby in this special milestone.

Northland Health Communications Leader

Awarded Public Service Commissioner's Commendation For Excellence



Public Service Commissioner, Peter Hughes, Liz Inch, and Deputy Public Service Commissioner, Heather Baggott

Te Whatu Ora – Te Tai Tokerau communications manager Liz Inch has been awarded the Public Service Commissioner's Commendation for Excellence.

At a ceremony at the Beehive in Wellington in November, Liz was one of 20 public servants awarded the commendation for their outstanding spirit of service.

Liz has served 11 and-a-half years as the Communications Manager with Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau, formerly Northland District Health Board.

She manages a team of several staff responsible for internal and external communications related to hospital and specialist services, community healthcare services, public health, infectious disease outbreaks, emergency management, staff and stakeholder information, media liaison, and strategic projects throughout the region.

Liz was nominated for the award by Ian McKenzie, General Manager of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Peter Thomas, General Manager of Te Poutokomanawa – Māori Health Services, and Jacquie Walters, former Senior Communications Advisor.

Mr McKenzie says that "Liz shows extraordinary dedication to her role."

"Liz is an inspiring and compassionate leader of her team and an incredibly staunch advocate for the people in the community she serves. She continually goes above and beyond in terms of the additional hours she works – often on-call on weekends and public holidays – and her passion for finding new ways to reach and engage with the community," he said.

The award citation included that her "deep commitment and passion for promoting equitable public health outcomes drives her to perform her role with tremendous humility. Liz is motivated by a higher purpose and yet she remains firmly grounded in local values, and she never seeks any accolades for her work."

Liz says she is humbled to have been nominated in the first place and for being awarded the honour.

"I am proud of my achievements and acknowledge that they couldn't have been realised without the partnerships, relationships and trust that has been formed over time," she said.

"There are challenges, particularly when managing crises such as meningococcal and measles outbreaks, as well as COVID-19, of course. We work hard on supporting each other, making sure that the load is shared, and each other's wellbeing is being looked after."

The NZ Public Service Award recognises Liz's wider health-related work in Te Tai Tokerau Northland, beyond her job with Te Whatu Ora.

She also serves as the communications lead for Te Ara Oranga, a unique Northland initiative to reduce the supply and demand for and, ultimately, the harm caused by methamphetamine – led jointly between Te Whatu Ora, the New Zealand Police and local community agencies.

"A highlight was making the music video **Let's Make a Change**, which went onto win at the Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) Awards in Wellington in 2020.

For many years, she was also a champion for the It's Not OK family violence prevention national campaign.

"One project I am immensely proud of is producing the documentary **Enough is Enough**, in partnership with the family of a young woman killed by an act of domestic violence, as well as the NZ Police and It's Not OK Campaign. The documentary highlights the damage family violence has on families and their communities."

Originally from Christchurch, Liz's passion for health care was inspired in the early 1980s during her nursing training at Burwood Hospital, subsequently studying for a Health Education Certificate at the Otago School of Medicine. After graduating, she worked as a nurse in Queensland, Australia, and later at Greymouth Hospital.

In 1990 she moved into health education and promotion with the Department of Health in Wellington. This led to a new job in 1993 with TVNZ at Avalon Studios in Lower Hutt, where she was responsible for the development of health and education television concepts. Key projects included *Alive & Kicking*, New Zealand's first health and lifestyle television series, and later the *Really Living* series.

In 1997 she moved back to Queensland to work in radio, scriptwriting and developing marketing strategies for six years. She then moved into an employment services advisory role and then into fundraising and promotions with an aged residential care and disability services provider.

Returning to Wellington in 2007, she worked in external relations and communications with Presbyterian Support Central, before moving to Northland in late 2008 for a job as Community Liaison Advisor with the Ministry of Social Development. It was 2012 when she joined Northland DHB.

Outside of work, Liz enjoys spending time with family and friends, as well as gardening, fishing, painting and photography – with some of her portrait and scenic photography prints displayed throughout Whangārei Hospital, the Jim Carney Cancer Centre and Bay of Islands Hospital.

Te Tai Tokerau Nursing Conference

An Overwhelming Success



Bronwyn Hedgecock, Julia Slark, Nadine Gray, Maree Sheard, Emma Hickson and Josephine Davis

Associate Professor Slark said it was such an important day for nursing in Te Tai Tokerau. She commented on the quality of mahi being undertaken by nurses working in Te Tai Tokerau and noted the importance of sharing that work with others across the sector. She also added that the research being done by these nurses is changing the lives of patients, whānau and communities for the better.

Dr Sheard said nurses in Te Tai Tokerau are not often provided with the opportunity to attend conferences, noting that it certainly had been the case in these past few COVID-impacted years.

The inaugural Te Tai Tokerau Nursing research conference collaboration between Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau and Waipapa Taumata Rau/University of Auckland School of Nursing was a momentous success.

Interest in the Te Tai Tokerau Nursing Conference held at Forum North in Whangārei in early November for registered and enrolled nurses and nurse practitioners in Te Tai Tokerau was evident early when registrations quickly reached capacity.

A major drawcard was the calibre of speakers that included Dr Maree Sheard, Chief Nurse Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau; Associate Professor Julia Slark, Head of School of Nursing and Whaea Erana Poulsen, University of Auckland; Nadine Gray, Chief Nursing Officer Te Aka Whai Ora, Emma Hickson Interim Chief Nursing Officer Te Whatu Ora and Angela Joseph, Director of Professional Standards at Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand.

Tai Tokerau nurses were invited to submit abstracts aligned with the theme, "How do we deliver equitable care?".

A strong lineup of presentations covering service innovation and evaluations, academic research, and funded research projects was held consecutively in three conference rooms, with keynote speakers chairing different sessions. Attendees heard directly about the experiences, challenges and successes of nurses working to ensure equity is actioned in their everyday spaces.

The final presenter, Dr Sue Adams – Co-Editor-in-Chief of Nursing Praxis in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing, Waipapa Taumata Rau/University of Auckland, discussed and encouraged nurses to make their nursing contributions to equitable outcomes visible through publishing. Dr Sheard and Associate Professor Slark then closed the day with final comments and acknowledged the organising committee, the presenters and the attendees.

"Te Tai Tokerau presents some unique challenges to nurses who are working hard to reduce significant health inequities. The conference provided an opportunity for nurses in our rohe to hear about improvements and novel approaches they can apply or adapt to contribute towards a reduction in health inequities."

Following the conference, Dr Sheard received an email from Emma Hickson Interim Chief Nursing Officer Te Whatu Ora, who commented on the amazing work she and her team were doing and said it was an inspiration to hear and experience the details.

Nadine Gray Chief Nursing Officer Te Aka Whai Ora also emailed Dr Sheard, saying her cup was full and that she had left feeling inspired and hopeful about the growth of advanced Nursing practice.

"The incredible innovation that exists through the sheer grit and determination of our neehi and your leadership. Engari, there is so much to do, especially growing our own Nurses. We are stronger together in this mahi," she said.

When reflecting on the attendee feedback, the conference organisers were pleased to see it was overwhelmingly positive, with most participants noting they would be extremely likely to attend future research conferences such as this. Comments included:

- "I have so appreciated the quality of every presenter. One of the best, most relevant conferences I have ever attended."
- "It motivates me to continue studying and do that paper (research project) gracefully and enthusiastically."
- "I had not considered research and may regret it as a life choice, but all the presenters were very inspiring. How lucky are we to have these nurses in Tai Tokerau!"

The conference organising committee intends to make this a regular event.

A summary of abstracts can be found on our [website](#).

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Bone Tingling Celebration



Radiography team celebrating World Radiography and Radiation Therapy Day with morning tea

The week between Halloween and World Radiography and Radiation Therapy Day was timed perfectly for the Whangārei Hospital Radiology Department staff who grabbed some bargains to decorate their space and dress up in to celebrate their special day on 8 November.

World Radiography and Radiation Therapy Day recognises the vital contributions of radiology to healthcare and patient outcomes and marks the anniversary of Professor Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen's discovery of X-rays on 8 November 1895.

On that date, Roentgen was experimenting with electric current flow in a partially evacuated glass tube, known as a cathode ray tube. He observed that a screen of barium platinocyanide far from the tube, gave off a green glow when the tube was in operation. Roentgen theorised that when the cathode rays struck the glass wall of the tube, some unknown radiation was formed, travelled across the room, struck the chemical screen, and caused fluorescence. He found they could also pass through books and paper on his desk. In view of its uncertain nature, he called the phenomenon X-Radiation.

He then went on to discover the medical use for X-ray when he made a picture of his wife's hand, making it the first picture of a human body part using X-rays.

This discovery would develop in time to include various methods of imaging and establish itself as a crucial element of modern medicine.

Whangārei Hospital radiographer Lindi Wall explained that radiographers, now more appropriately called Medical Imaging Technologists (MITs), also do CT scans, MRI scans, ultrasound scans, mammography, bone densitometry, nuclear medicine, fluoroscopy, angiography, help to guide surgeons in the operating theatre, and work in the Cardiac Cath laboratory.

This broad scope to upskill and change roles is what initially drew her to radiography, and she encourages other Northlanders to follow this career path close to home by heading to either Auckland University to complete a Bachelor of Medical Imaging degree (Honours) or a Bachelor of Health Science (Medical Imaging) from Unitec. Graduates can immediately start working in New Zealand and overseas as general MIT, and then eventually specialise in other modalities with some on-the-job training and further post-graduate studies.

Like other roles in healthcare, Lindi said, it can be challenging, especially if she discovers someone has cancer or even a broken bone. However, she said she tries to see it as providing the patient with an answer to what's going on so they can progress with treatment.

"We like to think we make a difference in someone's life and try to make the time we spend with them as comfortable and positive as possible."

She also emphasised that radiology isn't just about the staff that take the X-rays.

"Radiology perform 100,000 investigations every year across Tai Tokerau. The radiology department is a multidisciplinary team; which includes MITs, sonographers, radiology assistants, healthcare assistants, radiology nurses, the clerical team and radiologists, who are doctors who specialise in reporting the x-rays or imaging."

"Often, a patient's diagnosis relies on medical imaging, and our workload can be heavy, so it's easy to get bogged down with the work. Which is why we decided to put some effort into celebrating the work everyone does in the Radiology Department."

Staff Offered A Space For Serenity

Staff at Whangārei Hospital who need a space to decompress, now have a dedicated room to retreat to in comfort. The Serenity Room is a space to feel safe for those who need to separate themselves from the pressures of the clinical environment, to take a moment for themselves and to re-set the mind and body.

An application to the Wellbeing Fund by staff from various services, outlined the many reasons why this concept is essential for staff wellbeing.

It added that staff rooms were not always the right place to debrief in privacy.

All of this highlighted the need to create a dedicated space for staff to be able to remove themselves altogether from the ward. A space to enable them to reset and re-enter the workplace in a more positive frame of mind.

The application also had examples of research which included:

- Hospitals with dedicated nap rooms resulted in decreased errors during night shifts
- Common rooms which include massage chairs provide an excellent support to an employee's physical wellbeing

- Hospitals with indoor green spaces have higher staff retention and lower levels of staff and patient anxiety and discomfort

The group's original intention was to create a 'wellbeing suite' to include a serenity room, a room for massage chairs, a nap room and a small tearoom/ lounge/ study area. However, this was not possible because real estate within the hospital is at such a premium.

The team wanted to acknowledge Tū Tangata, Staff Wellbeing Steering Group and the Infrastructure and Commercial Services team as well as the Nursing and Midwifery directorate for their support and belief in the kaupapa of this space. A special mention also goes to the painters, carpet layers, and curtain makers. The combined dedication to this mahi has helped to produce an aesthetically beautiful space.

All staff are encouraged to use the Serenity Room as a safe place if they need it. The room is located in Room 19 on the Third Floor Service Wing.

Please note that the room is intended as a sacred space and as such, ask that it not be used for meetings or as a tearoom.



The Serenity Room

Infrastructure Projects Update

About Project Pihī Kaha

Planning is underway on the first stage of the Whangārei Hospital Redevelopment, to create an acute services building that will meet Northland's unique health needs by increasing service capacity while creating modern, fit-for-purpose facilities that provide equitable health care for its population.

Larger clinic areas and additional spaces for support services will enable the smooth running of operations, which will be complemented by new digital technologies to streamline services, support pandemic readiness and equip staff with the tools they need to continue to provide excellent care to Northland communities.

With improved staff and public zones, and culturally inclusive spaces that align with a Māori worldview, the new hospital will create a more welcoming and calming atmosphere for staff, patients and visiting whānau.

Project Pihī Kaha is expected to take nine years to complete and will provide broader social and economic benefits for Te Tai Tokerau. The project team is working closely with local and regional agencies to better understand local businesses' capacity and capability to ensure ample opportunities are available to educate and upskill the local workforce.



Enabling Works

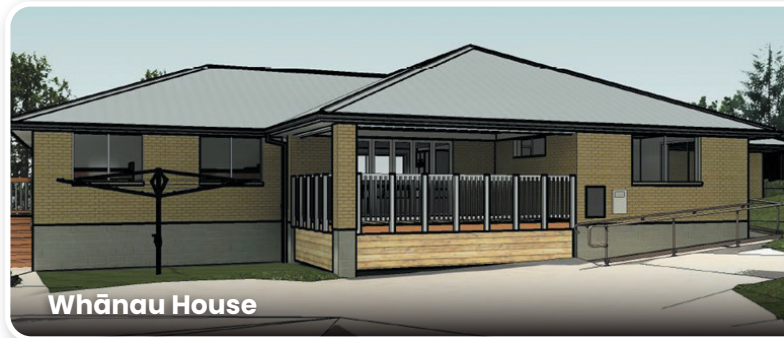
As part of the enabling works, some existing buildings will need to be moved from the building site, including the Whānau House and Child Health Centre. Work has already begun on these two projects to prepare the site for the main acute services building.

Whānau House - Te Whaea o te Iwi

Construction of a new Whānau House at 53 Hospital Rd is underway to create a more private, modern and comfortable space for whānau visiting the hospital from out of the region.

The main contractor has prepped the site with blockwork and concrete slabs, while installation of the timber walls will begin this side of Christmas.

This whare will retain its name of Te Whaea o te Iwi, and its construction is expected to be completed by June 2024.



Bay of Islands Stage 2

Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu ora, in partnership with Ngāti Hine Iwi and Ngāti Hine Health Trust, hosted a dawn blessing on 12 October for the new building named Paparātā which connects directly to the existing Stage 1 facility and forms the new entry point into the hospital providing primary general practitioner health/Whānau Ora services, outpatients, renal and oncology/haematology services.

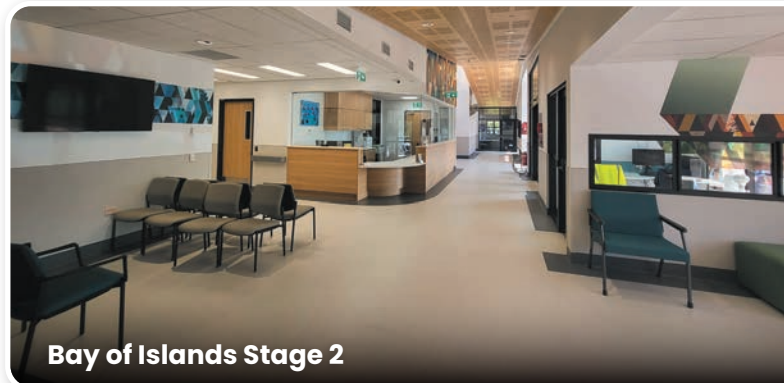
Primary health services will be provided by local Māori health provider Ngāti Hine Health Trust with a total of 15 rooms and open plan office space to provide clinical support for onsite GPs and advanced medical practitioners.

This is the first Hauora Partner-led service being delivered in Te Whatu Ora buildings and is the culmination of aspirations by late Ngāti Hine leaders Erima Henare, Rob Cooper and Gwen Tepania-Palmer.

The expected benefits of the services include improved integration and coordination of services between primary and secondary care and providing services closer to home for the Mid North community, negating the need to travel to Whangārei for specialist appointments and services.

The building also includes the ability for Mobile Health Services to locate on site providing elective day surgery, lithotripsy and other minor procedure mobile services including prosthetic limb workshop for immediate fittings to be completed for example.

The building and fit-out was provided by Ministry of Health National Capital Investment funding at a cost of \$14.5million. Paparātā was opened to public from 13 November 2023. **Paparātā Blessing**



Infrastructure Projects Update

Radiation Oncology

In 2019, the government unveiled plans to finance linear accelerators (Linacs) in Te Tai Tokerau. Subsequently, in 2021, approval was granted for funding a Linac facility at Whangārei Hospital.

Currently, Auckland Hospital boasts six Linacs, serving as the sole public radiation oncology provider in the northern region. This arrangement necessitates Northland patients to journey to Auckland for treatment. This development aims to not only reduce travel distances for Northland patients but also to alleviate the strain on the Auckland Hospital radiation oncology service.

The forthcoming facility will encompass:

- Two bunkers initially equipped with one linear accelerator machine.
- A CT scanner.
- Internal modifications to the adjacent Jim Carney Cancer Centre to facilitate seamless connectivity to the new facility.
- A link bridge connecting the Jim Carney Cancer Centre to the new Radiation Oncology building.
- Additional spaces for essential functions such as reception, waiting areas, and offices.

Entry to the new three-level facility (1850m²) is located on the top-floor via the Jim Carney Centre, where the two buildings are linked by a bridge. The upper level includes reception, consult and waiting areas for whānau. Staff workspaces and amenities are located on the mid-level and the partially underground lower level includes Linear Accelerator Treatment Rooms, wrapped in thick walls and a roof of concrete up to 2m thick.

Externally, the building features perforated metal screens with an elegant, fluted profile. These are designed to maintain privacy while also filtering natural light to create a softness to spaces that staff and patients spend time in. The ongoing demolition of the central stores signifies progress in preparing the site, while the procurement process for the main contractor's construction services is proceeding according to plan.

Construction is slated to commence in early 2024, with an anticipated two-year duration. Full operational functionality is expected to be achieved by mid-2026.



Te Kotuku extension

The project addresses key clinical service areas that face capacity constraints and provides interim capacity relief until the Whangārei Hospital Redevelopment has been completed.

The project delivers three new areas within a vertical extension to Te Tai Tokerau's existing Te Kotuku facility including:

- Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)
- Paediatric Ward
- Medical Laboratory

The project is progressing well through construction and is on track to be completed in early 2024 ahead of operationalising.



Kaitia Hospital Weathertightness Remediation

Funding to address weathertightness remediation issues at Kaitia Hospital was approved in March 2023.

The project is in procurement phase and currently engaging with design consultants to develop an appropriate solution, and the project is due to be completed by May 2026.

The project will address weather-tightness issues in several areas of the Hospital:

- General ward
- Theatres and kitchen
- Outpatients and ED building

The remediation program will prolong the useable life of the buildings until redevelopment of the campus proceeds.

Ophthalmology Refurbishment

The completion of the Te Kamo Community Oral Health project has paved the way for the expansion of ophthalmology into vacant dental areas on level 5 in the surgical wing.

The design phase has concluded successfully, enhancing accessibility and operability. This includes more clinical areas, resulting in increased procedure

Infrastructure Projects Update

and clinic rooms. The optimised layout ensures efficient use of space for a smoother patient flow.

The business case has been approved, and contracts are nearing completion. Construction is set to begin early in 2024, reinforcing our commitment to providing improved healthcare services to our community.

Minor Works Portfolio

The 2023/2024 prioritisation process has been finalised with new bids approved for capital funding from the Minor Works portfolio.

Some current projects include:

- Dargaville EV Car Park and Fire Upgrade
- BOI EV Car Park and Fire Upgrade
- Kaitaia Lift Replacement
- Kaitaia Audiology Upgrade
- Renal Unit Clinic Room Upgrade
- Surgical Admissions Unit
- Tumanako Anti-lig Upgrades
- Whangārei Helipad Upgrade

In addition to these projects, we have several annual programmes of work that are also underway:

- Nurse Call Replacement
- Whangārei Joinery
- Bathroom Refurbishment
- Whangārei Main Kitchen Upgrade
- Staff Housing & Healthy Homes
- Outdoor Furniture
- Health & Safety



Tuakana And Teina Te Reo Classes

Culminate Their Learning Journeys With A Weekend Filled With Tikanga, Joy And Companionship

On Friday, 8 December, 60 people from the Tuakana and Teina Te Reo classes gathered at Whangārei Terenga Paraoa Marae to culminate their learning journeys with a weekend filled with tikanga, joy and companionship.

The group first laid down a hāngī followed by karanga and pōwhiri, where the Teina group did an amazing job of presenting their pēpeha for the first time.

“The amazing ihi (energy) it took to stand in front of their peers and whānau made me feel very proud,” offered kaiako Mereana Pou.

After dinner, the group participated in various activities such as weaving and poi making.

The overnight stay on the Marae was described as humbling. For many, it was the first time staying on a Marae, which provided an immersion in communal traditions.

It was all hands on deck on Saturday morning, cooking the breakfast and preparing lunch for the day ahead.

The group then headed to Kowharewa Bay, a sheltered inner harbour beach on Tutukaka Block Road.

The day was spent taking turns paddling the waka, Kahakura. The Waka Kahakura is cared for by the kaitiaki group called Te Manawa Pū.

An enjoyable day was had by all, filled with waiata and great kai.

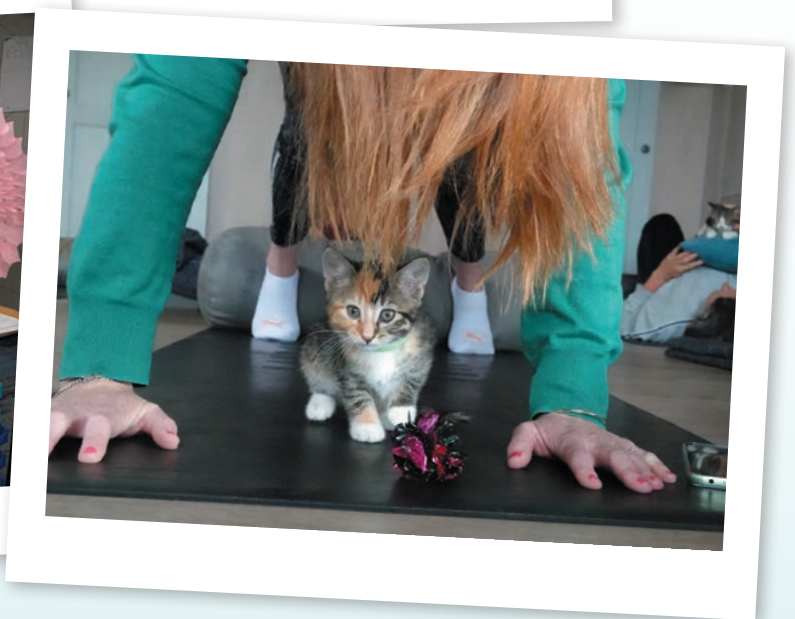
“I am immensely proud of all the taura over the years, they have been amazing and inspire me to continue on with the Reo wānanga journey,” Mereana said.

“I acknowledge Te Poutokomanawa, Jeanette Wedding, Daynah Kinita, Megan Hodgson, Catherine Parker and the many people who have absolutely supported, guided and protected the Reo wānanga since 2016.”



Out & About





Tanya Kitchen

Nursing Is Always About The Patients' First



Tanya Kitchen

When Tanya Kitchen left her job at Whangārei Hospital in late November, she signed off on 22 years working in Orthopaedics, ward 1, the past eight of those as clinical nurse manager.

Not one to sit around after taking early retirement, Tanya's heading to Queensland's

Sunshine Coast to be with her daughter who lives there and explore other avenues for getting the best out of life.

An avid traveller, more of that is in her sights as well as delving into artistic pursuits. You never know, she jokes, she might discover a talent for painting or any number of creative outlets.

"I enjoy multi-tasking, I need to be busy and always have a project on the go," Tanya said.

Her house in Whangārei and a bach at Tokerau Beach have kept her busy and she sees a time she'll return to continue projects at the bach in particular. But that's not on the cards for quite some time. One thing she's sure to make the most of in Australia is her love of the sea and snorkeling. Tanya has been a regular volunteer at the highly successful Exploring Marine Reserves (EMR) summer snorkeling programmes around Northland's coast.

Born and bred in the Far North, Tanya left Kaitaia High School and moved to Auckland for nursing training in the mid-1980s. She was in one of the first intakes of students in the new polytechnic-based nurse training, graduating after three years of study which had a higher on-ward component of learning than courses do these days.

"The year I started training was the year that nursing hats went out although we still wore the white uniforms and red epaulettes and stockings. I still have my red cape and epaulettes."

She's grateful for that early, extensive hands-on learning and would like to see today's students have the same opportunity.

"I was very lucky that, as it was the first polytechnic nursing course in Auckland, so much of the training was hospital-based. In those days you were bonded to a department," she said.

Since graduating from North Shore Polytechnic in 1987, Tanya has spent 38 years as a nurse in various nursing and management roles.

Starting her career at Auckland's Middlemore Hospital, Tanya worked first in orthopaedic, then medical and cardiology wards.

"Those were days of glass wound drainage bottles, mercury thermometers that you seem to smash without any effort, rooms of patients in traction and intermuscular injections were how pain relief was given."

Taking time out for three months for her OE heightened her love of travel before she returned to Middlemore where she was soon placed on the Special Assignment Team (SAT).

The role included being seconded to areas of need on wards within that hospital and others. She was then seconded for a year as charge nurse in the medical cardiology ward at Middlemore before heading overseas to work.

"I went to Saudi Arabia when I was 29 years old for three years and worked in Riyadh King Faisal Royal hospital which was 1,800 beds in the Cardiovascular Telemetry Unit and used the generous holiday time we were given to travel widely around the Middle East and Europe."

Tanya moved to England worked as a volunteer for National Trust in London and two years later, following the end of a relationship, returned to New Zealand with her infant daughter who was born in Croydon Hospital.

She worked in Kaitaia Switzer Rest Home for a year doing night shifts before moving to Whangārei.

"I'm very lucky, I have an amazing family, they're very supportive and they helped me. I was able to go to Whangārei Hospital and say I was available for work from Mondays to Fridays. That was 22 years ago, and I went straight to Ward 1.

"Whangārei has been a wonderful place to work. The staff here are amazing. I've had nurses in this ward that I first saw as students and now they're working in senior roles here."

Orthopaedic nursing has always been close to Tanya's heart and central to her philosophy on nursing.

"People come in here because they've had sudden trauma, they've had a long time in pain with limited mobility or they're elderly and require procedures to help them living the best possible life at their age.

"It gives us the honour of looking after some of our older people in that difficult, vulnerable time in their lives.

"Systems change, but nursing is always about the patients' first. People don't always remember what treatment they had but they remember the care they got, and how they were made to feel and that is nursing's focus.

"Patients have to know they are acknowledged and know that the staff genuinely care for them. I think we do that well."

Honey Girl's Happily Ever After



Tina Milich picking up Honey Girl

Coast to Coast Cat Rescue is a charitable organisation dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and rehoming of cats.

Sam Stewart, Chairperson of Coast to Coast Rescue based in Kawakawa, says that she hopes this initiative will solve a bigger picture.

"We kept hearing people say that they can't quite make their superannuation stretch that far to care for a cat, or they were worried about what was going to happen to the cat when they die.

"I thought wouldn't it be great, if we could get some sponsorship from local businesses to help pay for the ongoing food and any medical bills that may come up, and then an older person that can't afford to do all that themselves also gets a companion, so it's kind of a win, win for everybody," she says.

A recent success story involves a tortoiseshell called Honey Girl and two of our staff members, Tina Milich a personal assistant at Dargaville Hospital and Francie Long, who is a business partner Rural Hospitals and a volunteer for Coast to Coast Rescue.

"Francie mentioned to me about the companion cat initiative. This really sparked my interest as my mother Gael had recently lost her partner John and her cat had become unwell and had to be put down.

"The family was on the lookout for a kitten for Mum. She mentioned how an older cat was a better option and explained the companion cat advantages," says Tina.

"Honey Girl is an absolute delight. So friendly and affectionate and great with other cats despite being a Tortie!

"This sweet girl was surrendered to the rescue after her owners got a dog which Honey Girl did not take to very well," shares Sam.

The organisation has two sponsors paying for Honey Girl, based in Whakatane who heard about the programme on a radio show and wanted to help.

The connection was made, and the process was soon completed when Tina picked up Honey Girl for her mother, and the replaced family pet quickly settled into her new forever home.

"I picked up Honey and took her to mum. Honey hopped out of her travel box and my mum's eyes just glowed. Honey was kept inside for a week to get to know her new environment and mum. It has been so good for my mum to have a buddy and to occupy her," smiles Tina.

Francie runs occasional Yin Yoga and Kitten Classes in Paihia to fundraise for the cause, in her spare time.

"There are plenty of cuddles and laughter and a bit of yoga. The money raised goes toward the relentless work Sam and the crew do rehoming and desexing cats and kittens across Northland," she mentions.

A group participant who recently drove up from Whangārei to attend, said that it was one of the most enjoyable afternoons she could ever imagine.

"It felt like Christmas when the kittens were introduced into the relaxing yoga space, all my worries disappeared. It was one hour of pure joy for both the kittens and the humans alike. The world would be a better place if everyone attended kitten yoga."

Some attend to take a new family member home, others are open to fostering and there are some who may not be able to have a cat, so it is used as their joy fix while supporting a great initiative.

The litters being familiarised with people and each other last weekend, were only six weeks old and had been rescued with their mother from a ditch.

The most important thing is gaining more sponsors and drumming up awareness around the number of stray cats in the area.

Francie points out the importance of having cats spayed, neutered, and vaccinated as responsible animal owners. The adult cats are not as easy to home as the cute little kittens, but all are longing for someone to love them, and the older cats need a chance.

Twelve months from now, Sam hopes more adult cats will be homed while giving elderly residents a cuddly companion and supporting plenty more happily ever after stories.

'Te Whītiki O Te Oranga'

The Well-Being Of People Is Embraced Within The Realm Of The Whitiki



The Artwork

Narrative offered by Waihoroi Shortland 2023

Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Whatu Ora, in partnership with Ngāti Hine iwi and Ngāti Hine Health Trust, hosted a dawn blessing on 12 October of Paparātā, Bay of Islands Hospital.

Te Hemo Ata Henare and Theresa Reihana were asked to design a cultural artwork to be integrated into the new wing of Bay of Islands Hospital (known as Paparātā) to be applied as decal.

The concept was based on Te Whare Rongoā and whakaaro of Erima Henare, Percy Tipene, Rob Cooper and others (Ngāti Hine Health Trust) in 2010.

The colours given highlight Rongoā and recognise the importance of treating the whole person.

Whakapapa (Waiporoporo or purple), Wairua (Kahurangi, Kikorangi or blue, Mana (Kakariki or green), Te Ao Tūroa (Karakā or orange), Mauri (Whero or red) and Parakore (Mā or White).

The Whītiki (belt) is a traditional woven belt. Its many threads incorporating te whiri o te iwi. The weaving together of the people.

The design is contemporary and organic, with the main features being Taki toru (three-way communication and direction) using the weaving pattern Rau Kūmara (Feeding the people, kūmara garden).

The Whītiki wraps around the corridors, similar to a ribbon, starting and ending at the airlock entrance area. The colours are traditional and are restricted to the colours of Kōrari. The fastening element of the Whītiki is not closed but the placement of it symbolises the act of acceptance.

Upon leaving the entrance area the colours then gradient into the colours that represent the spiritual aspect of healing (Te Whare Rongoā Concept 2010) given to us in 2015 by Percy Tipene.

These colours dominate the waiting area of Primary Health and Outpatients. This includes the security room and Interview Room which are also located within this area.

Primary health waiting room 'Whero' flows into 'Waiporoporo' on the opposite wall and into the Interview room.

From the waiting room into the Primary Health Corridor the colours are green. This corridor depicts Rakau from the coast and into different areas or whānau of Rakau. Colours include bark and flowers of these plants.

The Renal Corridor is based on the Moana.

From the Renal Corridor and into the Outpatients Corridor the colours reflect 'Wai'. This corridor depicts the path of water from the Puna to the Moana and different colours of 'Wai' of Ngāti Hine. On this journey are reflected other aspects of nature. Trees, rocks, earth etc.

From the Outpatients corridor the colours change to Kahurangi in the waiting room. The colours now revert back to the healing colours of Te Whare Rongoā Concept.

Karakā flows along this space and into the security room where it then reverts to the traditional colours of the entrance.

Above the Reception Desk the pattern incorporates all the colours with the whole pattern.

Te Whatu Ora

Health New Zealand

Te Tai Tokerau

Primary Care Diabetes Symposium

A Huge Success



Mr Sean Liddle

The appetite for primary care clinicians in Te Tai Tokerau to gain more knowledge and cement connections was proven when more than 60 GPs, practice nurses, Health Improvement Practitioners (HIPs), community pharmacists, dietitians & paramedics gathered together for our Te Tai Tokerau Primary Care Diabetes Symposium on Saturday 30 September – despite it clashing with an All Blacks Rugby World Cup match.

After attending similar conferences around New Zealand Te Whatu Ora Specialist Diabetes, Clinical Nurse Specialists/Mentor's Joan van Rooyen and Sarah Willacy wanted to provide an educational forum for their colleagues in primary health that specifically covered issues and areas they are seeing out in practice.

Together with CNM Amanda Brown, they specifically worked to design a symposium with a Northland flavour that catered to the needs of our community and the practitioners who care for them. Because Health Fund PLUS managed all the finances and administration, they could focus their time on the Symposium content, which was very well received by attendees.

One person said it was by far the best training they had been to since being out of the hospital system. Amanda said several people told her it felt like the first big face-to-face event that they had been to since the pandemic.

“The gold in this event was not just the amazing presentations, but the opportunity to korero with other

people – particularly for our primary care practitioners who don't always get to link in with other people.

“We chose topics that our colleagues in primary care are experiencing an increase in. For example, since COVID-19, there's been an increase in diabetes presentations, so we asked Dr Nicole McGrath to speak about Latent Autoimmune Diabetes of Adulthood (LADA).

“We also felt there were misconceptions around who could and couldn't be referred to the Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau Bariatric surgery programme – so this was an opportunity for our Bariatric surgery team to present and connect with primary care about their updated service.”

Attendees also heard about the latest diabetes technology, diet trends and medications, and then, at the end of the day, there was time for a Q&A panel discussion.

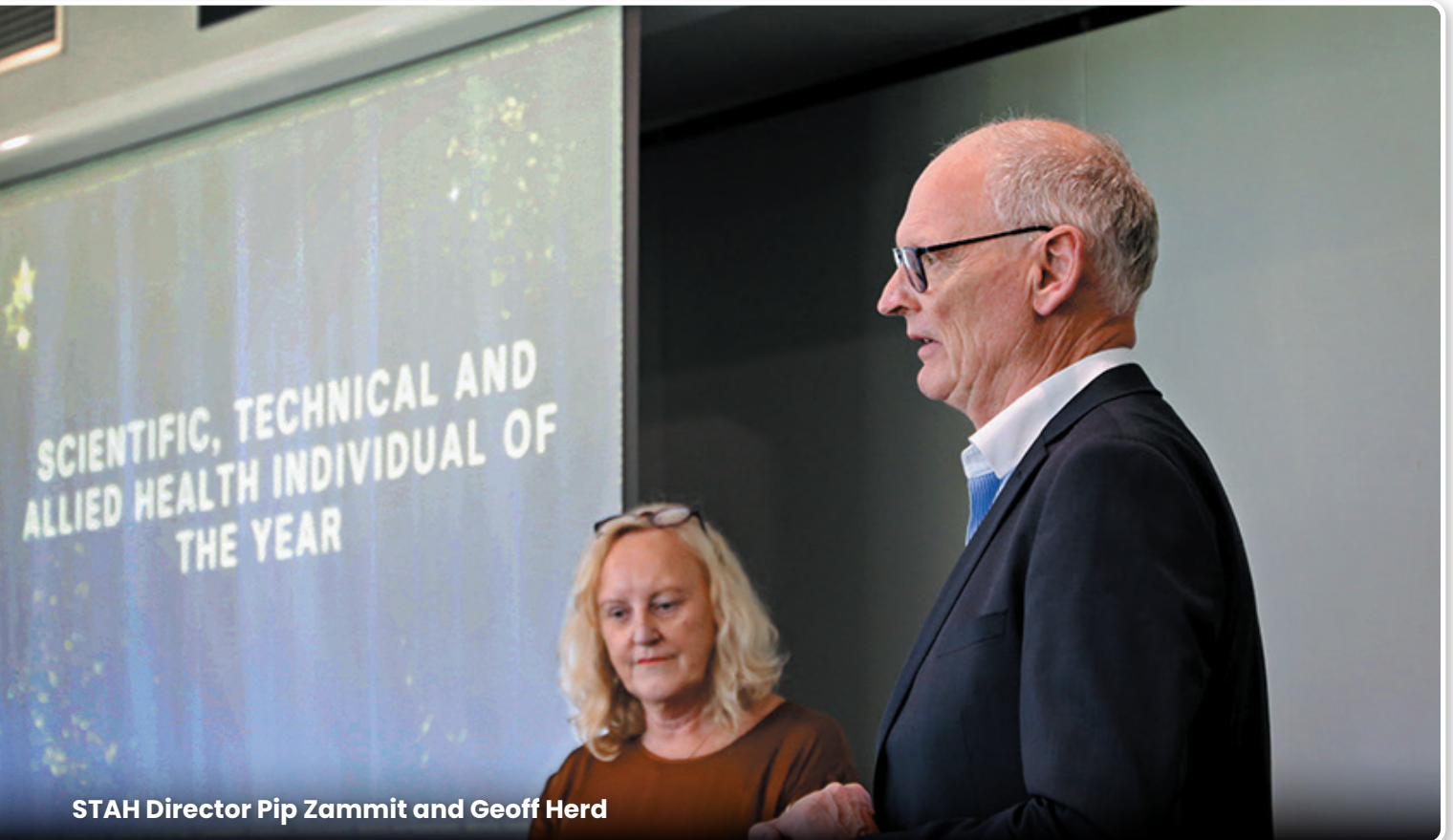
Thanks to sponsorship from Boehringer Ingelheim, Pharmaco Diabetes, Novo Nordisk, Mediray Diabetes, Hato Hone St John and NZMS Diabetes Dexcom, the team were able to provide the event for free, including a catered lunch, which Amanda said was very important to them considering the attendees had to give up their weekend to advance their knowledge for the benefit of their patients.



Primary Care Diabetes Symposium

The Inaugural Scientific,

Technical And Allied Health Awards



STAH Director Pip Zammit and Geoff Herd

Our allied health workers were celebrated at the inaugural Scientific, Technical and Allied Health (STAH) Awards last month at McKay Stadium in Whangārei.

STAH Director Pip Zammit and her team hosted the event with certificates and prizes presented to the finalists and winners (noted below) by Chris McLellan, Interim General Manager of Hospital Operations and Support Services, on behalf of Alex Pimm, Interim Group Director of Operations, who was unable to attend.

Te Hiranga – Up and Coming Early Career Award – Lydia Henderson, Paediatrician Dietitian

Te Tai Tokerau Values Recognition – Aly Hosking, Occupational Therapist and Shelley Mekkelholt, Occupational Therapist.

Research Excellence Award – Vicki Freyer, Occupational Therapist.

He Waka Eke Noa (we are all in this together) Award for Teamwork:

Team: Bay of Islands' Physios, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Allied Health Assistants

Individual: Karen Thorburn, Social Work Team Lead

Quality Improvement Award – Wai McLeod, Physiotherapist

Service Innovation Award – Rhonda Williams, Allied Health Assistant and Sharon Mumford, Physiotherapist

Scientific, Technical and Allied Health Individual of the Year – Geoff Herd

Many people across the STAH Professional groups have been privileged to work with Geoff at some point in their careers. Here is a note from his nomination submission:

Geoff goes above and beyond aiming for the safest patient care, equity and striving to achieve excellence in all his work. He is respectful of the patient, and of his colleagues and team members. He has an excellent all-systems approach. Geoff always has patients' rights centre stage. Geoff exemplifies a hardworking, systematic, detail oriented, knowledgeable, and empathic scientist.

Geoff created the national NZ Point of Care Testing Advisory Group (NZ POCT AG) in 2009, and it is going strong. The group, with Geoff's active involvement, has been a strong advocate for better regulation and governance of Point of Care Testing in the country. Also, with Geoff's active leadership, the group met with PHARMAC and Medsafe over the years to forward the case for safer point of care tests to be rolled out. By taking patient concerns seriously and vigorously investigating near misses, Geoff has been instrumental in removing an unsafe point of care testing device from DHBs. The NZ POCT AG was also instrumental in advising on the quality of RAT tests during the pandemic.

Te Whatu Ora

Health New Zealand

Te Tai Tokerau

Yummy Mummy's Coffee Group

The Yummy Mummy's coffee group is an initiative originally birthed by Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau and later handed over to Whānau Āwhina Plunket Whangārei, and proves a crucial pathway in the journey to support teenage Mums in Northland.

The group has become more than a place for young mums to meet and share experiences of parenting. Many group members said that if it hadn't been for Cara Tuala (Kaiāwhina) that they would feel alone, and things would have been much harder for mother and child alike. Kaiāwhina means a taonga (treasure) that embodies the core essence of an essential workforce that is passionate, resilient, diverse, skilled and committed to supporting hauora (holistic wellbeing) outcomes.

Cara's persistent offers of support and love has at times taken years to convince someone to make that first step. The referral comes to her through the midwives, and often Cara will make the initial connection to start consistent care and build a trusted ongoing relationship.

"They need to know a face first to then come along," she says.

"They are lucky to have you Cara," says Monique Williams, Midwife at Te Pua Waiora, Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau.

Monique attends the classes every week to maintain connections and offer a link in the journey that often starts at the hospitals Harmony Classes, better known as the ante-natal classes specifically for young parents.

One mother, Tasia, shared that after two years of Cara knocking at her door, she finally decided to attend Yummy Mummy's Classes.

"It brought me out of my shell. I feel less alone now that I come along every week, everyone is really welcoming and open. It is a safe space for me," she shares.

These days, Tasia now comes along regularly with her two daughters under two and it would be hard to pick her for the young lady lacking confidence she once was.

As she lovingly pushes her daughters on the swing, happiness and joy radiate from the 24-year-old as she chats about the love of her children.

"These are the precious outcomes for many of the girls," says Cara.

"The most rewarding part of my job is when they start directly connecting with each other."

Another young Mum says that she moved up from Palmerston North and knew nobody here, now she has made new friends and wished she had come along sooner. The space is friendly and relaxed with places for the children to play, making new friends that will

follow them though to their school years.

Often, motivation to keep attending on the hard weeks for the mothers is sparked by the little people who want to go back to the highlight of their week. Some families even double up and come from the Raumanga group to Kensington to tire the young legs out and stay connected.

It is agreed here that they all understand now what the saying, 'it takes a village' means and the inspirational teenage Mums are relieved that they have found this support.

There is someone on hand each step of the way for these girls, and Cara is well known and loved as this crucial connector.

From preloved clothing, information, and occasional guest speakers to fresh baking each week provided by local Whangārei group Good Bitches Baking – a network who bake treats for people having a tough time in partnership with the organisations that provide on the ground services.

The Yummy Mummy's are looking forward to their Christmas event this year, funded by Mumma's Moving Mountains, who also walk alongside many of the families, encouraging exercise, innovation and inspiring these wahine to reach for the stars.



Tasia and her children

The Gift That Keeps On Flowing



Recently, a patient, Chris Pickering, donated a water cooler to the Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre for patients, whānau and staff to use on the treatment floor.

Chris, who used to work for Water4u, thought the patients could benefit from an in-line cooler.

"I used to service the coolers throughout the hospital; there were about eighty of them," he says.

As Chris was sitting on the chair of the treatment room, receiving his second round of chemotherapy, he started to wonder what he could do to help other patients.

"These people deserve the best kind of water cooler there is." He proceeded to pay for the cooler and the installation of an upgraded version.

Chris said the benefit of the water cooler he bought and installed is that it is self-sufficient (source from mains water supply), so it is not reliant on someone re-filling the bottle from a tap.

The risk of potential contamination is extra important to avoid for immune-vulnerable people undergoing chemotherapy. This type of filter does not harbour any bacteria. The hardworking staff agreed that the water cooler was a welcomed gift for them also. No longer having to re-fill the machine when things are busy, and the water is described as beautiful.

Chris acknowledges his friend Colin from Water4u, who donated his time fitting the cooler.

The Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre was built so that many Northlanders could have treatment in Whangārei, in a state-of-the-art facility, saving the long trip to Auckland and back.

"It is a great atmosphere here, considering what everyone is going through. I don't think I'd have received better service and wrap-around care from Te Whatu Ora, even if I had been a millionaire," says Chris with appreciation to everyone involved in his journey.

Tobacco And Vape "Mystery Shopping"

Operation Shows Crack-Down On Underage Illegal Sales Is Paying Off

A recent Controlled Purchase Operation (CPO) of 20 tobacco and vape retailers throughout the Far North and Whangārei districts shows public health efforts to educate retailers and prevent underage sales are paying off. During the operation, underage trained volunteers (between 14 and 17 years old) attempted to purchase tobacco and vaping products from retailers. The operation resulted in zero sales from the 20 retailer outlets tested by the smoke-free enforcement staff.

"The retailers we tested had very good systems in place and asked for identification on every occasion, preventing sales of these harmful products to our rangatahi," said Smoke-free Enforcement Officer Zane Jones, from Te Whatu Ora – National Public Health Service.

"By educating retailers and helping them implement stronger systems, we're ensuring they meet their legal requirements and aren't perpetuating the harm these products can cause to the next generation."

Public health has been engaging tobacco and vaping retailers across Northland to ensure they have systems in place to prevent underage sales. Retailers are urged to always assess the age of customers by insisting on a form of photo identification from anyone who looks under the age of 25. Those who cannot provide photo identification must be refused from purchasing tobacco and vape products.

"Despite this, too many young people are still getting their hands on vapes in Te Tai Tokerau. If these minors aren't getting vapes from licenced retailers, then it means other

people are buying them and passing them on. We're urging adults to stop supplying vape products to underage people." CPO's will continue to be conducted randomly during the year.

November 2023 Northland Smokefree Operation Statistics:

- 12 Vape Retailers visited in Kaitaia, Awanui, Whangārei – NO SALES
- 8 Tobacco Retailers visited in Kaitaia, Taipa, Coopers Beach, Kaeo – NO SALES

Tobacco use and breathing in other people's smoke (second-hand smoke) causes about 5,000 deaths every year through cancer, stroke and heart disease.^[1]

It is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in New Zealand.^[2]

Stopping smoking completely is the best way to reduce the risk of smoking related diseases, such as cancer, heart disease and stroke.

For more advice on how to quit smoking, visit – <https://smokefree.org.nz/help-advice>.

[1] Ministry of Health. (2004). Looking upstream: Causes of death cross-classified by risk and condition, New Zealand 1997. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

[2] Tobias, M., & Turley, M. (2005). Causes of death classified by risk and condition, New Zealand 1997. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 29, 5-12.

Tu Kaha

Inpatient Mental Health Facility



Damian Aimers, Complex Manager, Bunnings Waipapa with Sonya Marais.

Tu Kaha, the inpatient mental health facility in the Mid North, has the first sub-acute sensory room in Northland.

A sensory room is a multipurpose area used by residents visiting whānau, Tu Kaha Community Support workers and mental health multidisciplinary team members.

The area is intended to be used as a recovery-focused tool which allows practitioners to move away from using purely clinical treatments to using recovery focused treatments such as sensory modulation and cognitive behaviour therapy.

Sonya Marais, Occupational Therapist for Mid North Community Mental Health and Addiction Services at Te Whatu Ora, has been working towards a long-term goal of completing a recovery Occupational Therapy Rongoā Sensory Garden Project at Tu Kaha.

However, in the meantime has created the first sensory room at a Te Whatu Ora-owned and operated sub-acute unit in Kaikohe.

"A part of a bigger project in the development of a rongoā sensory garden, the sensory room provides people a safe place to have appointments, meet visitors or just be in a calm space to spend some time," Sonya said.

Bunnings across Northland supported the service by donating materials and providing 11 people for a working bee.

"We welcomed the Bunnings staff with a pōwhiri and then spent the day completing the room and making the raised vegetable gardens with herbs, vegetables and rongoā.

Local mural artist Erica Pearce was commissioned to produce the beautiful artwork in the room.

"Erika has painted murals throughout New Zealand as well as in Japan, USA, Australia, Thailand, Fiji, and Indonesia for many businesses, festivals, and private homes, so we feel very privileged to have had her input," Sonya said.

"The support we have had from everyone involved has been amazing. We certainly couldn't have achieved this on our own, and the difference it will make to the whaiora in our care is immense.

"Tu Kaha residents now have a safe, private space to relax and engage in a mindfulness and relaxing activity of their choice."

Tu Kaha is a six-bed Te Whatu Ora-owned and operated sub-acute inpatient mental health facility in Kaikohe, Northland.

Rugby Stars Spread Cheer

Bearing gifts from the police force and rugby life, Black Fern Charmaine Smith and Taniwha Dan Hawkins visited Whangārei Hospital Children's ward this morning, spreading Christmas cheer.

Two-year Lochie Hurley chatted away happily with the rugby stars, thoroughly enjoying all the beautiful gifts they had brought him.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have been able to buy one of these jerseys," Claire Hurley offered.

"It was amazing, thank you so much Charmaine and Dan. It's made the hospital stay not so terrible and put a big smile on my little boy's face."

Fresh off the beat and celebrating a win against the Wallaroos in the women's rugby test recently, it was on top of Charmaine's mind to visit the children's ward while home in Whangārei.

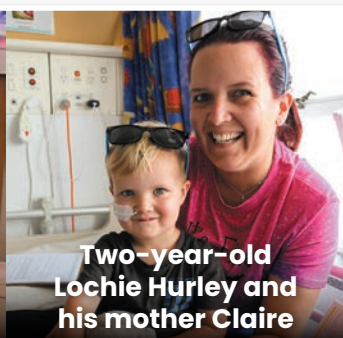
"It's been nice to meet the children and their whānau and spread a little bit of joy," Charmaine said.

Parent and Taniwha Dan Hawkins recognised how grounding it can be when you visit unwell children.

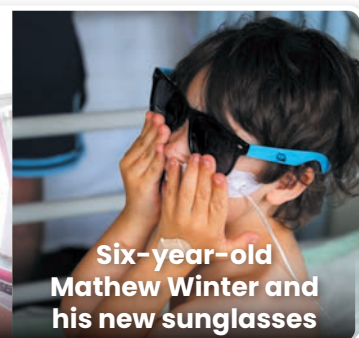
"It was awesome to meet Mathew and Lochie, who, despite being unwell, gave us the biggest smiles," acknowledge Dan.



Black Fern Charmaine Smith and Taniwha Dan Hawkins



Two-year-old Lochie Hurley and his mother Claire



Six-year-old Mathew Winter and his new sunglasses

Staying safe this summer

Be prepared and know how to stay well!

If you plan on travelling



- **COVID-19 is still a risk.** Plan for if you test positive and need to isolate or change your plans at short notice.
- Make sure you have a **full supply** of **all your regular medications**.
- Find out where you can **access health services** when you're away.
- Pack a supply of masks and RATs (5 per whānau member).
Available free – find sites at healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19

Look out for yourself and others



- **Drink plenty of water**; especially important for older people, children and pets.
- Stay out of the sun and if you have to go outside, **slip, slop, slap and wrap**.
- Take your **prescribed medication** to stop flare ups and keep well.
- **Check in** on those who live alone, especially older or disabled people.
- For mental health support, **call/text 1737**, call **0800 543 354** or **text HELP to 4357**.

If you feel unwell



- If you're unwell, **stay home** or wherever you are on holiday.
- **Take a RAT test** if you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, we recommend that you **self-isolate for at least 5 days**.

Getting help over the summer



- For **free medical advice** 24/7 call **Healthline on 0800 611 116**. In an emergency call **111**.
- Visit your **community pharmacy** for advice on **common health issues**.
- If you're away from home, you can **book a virtual consultation online** with a **GP**.
- **Rural telehealth service 0800 252 672** (5pm – 8am) on weekdays, and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays.



Care at home

Information and tips at [Healthify.nz](https://healthify.nz)



Healthline 0800 611 116

Free medical advice and information any time



Pharmacy

Advice on medicine and vaccinations



General Practice Medical Centre

Appointments – in person or virtual



Accident Urgent Medical Centre

Out of hours or urgent treatment



Emergency Ambulance

Call 111 in an emergency

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

Te Tai Tokerau

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If your department has something to share, email communications@northlanddhb.org.nz