

Te Kaika Opening

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Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu

One of the first tasks I did when taking up a role with Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu, was to draft a release to promote the focus of a **Very Low Cost Access** GP clinic to be established in Dunedin.

The release dated 26 February 2015 - advised that Te Kaika will receive funding to scope out a model for improving whānau wellbeing.

Te Kaika spokesperson Albie Laurence said that whānau had identified a range of practical changes that would make primary healthcare work better for them, including increasing the amount of time for consultations.

“Providing integrated services through co-location was also important so that a whānau could access other services in partnership with health delivery. Opening hours, physical layout and kaupapa Maori approaches are all central to changing the look and feel of the clinic.

Three years on, today is a wonderful day to celebrate the achievement of a remarkable dream coming through to fruition in just three years.

It has taken leaders who held the vision and conviction that their dream can be achieved. A team who have inspired the power and energy to provide primary health care that responds to whānau needs.

It sounds so easy – and yet clearly if it was, we would expect a Te Kaika in every town. What these three years have shown us, therefore, is the architectural plan for how to achieve the impossible is based on three simple steps.

The first success factor in creating Te Kaika has been the attention given to collaboration.

A vital part of the process has been developing a collaborative partnership between Te Putahitanga o Te Waipounamu, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, the Pacific Community, Te Mataora; Te Runaka o Otakou, the University of Otago and Araiteuru Whare Hauora.

The collaborative approach has also been extended to the local community of home owners to keep them fully involved in the development of Te Kāika and the benefits for their community.

Every step of the way, the team behind Te Kaika have been mindful that for it to truly be a village of their making, they needed to open their hearts and minds to the people that live all around them; the community of Caversham that were here in the days when the hub was a school.

It is therefore wonderful to have us all here together, as partners, connected through our unique collaboration. The key to sustainability lies in maximising the collaborative partnership while maintaining iwi and community ownership.

The second step has been on thinking big; on being able to see the impossible.

I want to reflect back on the vision that came across our table in 2015.

The initial idea for Te Kaika came as a result of the experiences of a health manager in a Pacific organisation who found that health services in Dunedin were too expensive for the whanau that he worked with.

Too often whānau would go to the emergency department and wait for six to eight hours to be seen for things that could have been dealt with by a GP.

One time in particular demonstrated the struggles that whanau faced. A young Maori man had moved from Christchurch and clearly needed support for his health and wellbeing. The manager tried to enrol him with a doctor but as he had a history of owing money to GPs, no one was prepared to enrol him.

Profit over people; bill payments prioritised over a clean bill of health.

This manager then started talking with the chairperson of Otakou Runaka who had realised these same concerns when she managed a local Maori health provider.

From this conversation the Te Kaika Health hub was born:

They imagined a culturally responsive, affordable and accessible purpose built health hub.

It's one thing to have the vision; but quite another to do the hard work necessary to make change happen.

And so the third major pillar for success in Te Kaika is in mobilising the energy, building the capability, to make this day happen.

A big part has been the paper war: working through the planning and council processes; swotting up on regulations; navigating funding applications, policy and procedural requirements. It has required a consistently high level of planning and implementation; reports to the Commissioning Agency; managing the tender for construction, maintaining the financial oversight and completing the establishment plan and initial fit-out.

But it's also been about the work of relationships: taking the time to ensure decision making is shared; developing a sense of collective ownership that might not have been possible among such diverse partners without the initial funding to plant the seed of hope.

It has also meant partners reaching far outside their comfort zone. The project has built the capability of the community to utilise resources that normally sit outside of whānau reach, such as the University of Otago; who are assisting in the teaching and research activities within the clinic.

The passion for the kaupapa has seen the project grow. The commitment of so many partners - such as dentistry, nutrition, gym and physiotherapy; rehabilitation, health promotion, and social services, enable a greater range of free to low cost services to be incorporated into the village. Te Kaika has the potential to make Maori ways of knowing and being more visible in mainstream medical practice.

Finally, in the space of three years – from just the point of view of Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu - you have reported to, consulted and shared the excitement of progress with three Ministers for Whānau Ora; two Board Chairs; two Taumata Chairs; three Chief Executives, and a cast of Contract Advisors, Whānau Enterprise Coaches, and Whānau Ora Navigators.

It is such a special moment for us all to have the inaugural Minister for Whānau Ora here to see at first hand the fruits of her vision coming to life.

I would like to ask our Board Chair Trevor Taylor to present Te Kaika with a visual reminder of the new life that now reaches out across Caversham and beyond; the village of opportunity represented in this wonderful community, Te Kaika.

We congratulate you; we celebrate with you; and we pledge our ongoing commitment to enabling this very precious vision to grow.