

## **VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai media release**

Date of release: Thursday, 26 January 2017

Comment can be attributed to John McCarthy, The Tindall Foundation Manager and Chair of the Connection and Advocacy Service Establishment Steering Group.

### **Children and young people in care choose a name for their connection and advocacy service**

Children and young people are helping shape the future of New Zealand's care system, by choosing the name VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai, for their new independent connection and advocacy service.

The service will fill a significant gap for children and young people in care in New Zealand, and follows the 2015 Expert Panel review of Child, Youth and Family.

The Panel found children and young people said they crave nurturing and love, and feel the stigma of being in care. They feel powerless in the face of a system which is perceived to hold all the power and have no voice in important decisions being made about their future.

"VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai will have a huge influence and provide a vital and long overdue change to the New Zealand care system, and I'm so glad to be part of it. It is just so important that the voices of children and young people are heard, and that they are connected with each other and know they are not alone," says Monique Goodhew, a care experienced representative on the Steering Group establishing the service, and member of the former Youth Advisory Panel to the Minister for Social Development.

VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai stands for 'Voice of the Young and Care Experienced - Listen to me', and represents the need for children and young people in care to be heard and their voices kept at the centre of all decisions made about them.

The naming follows the enthusiastic participation of around 100 children and young people in fun and collaborative workshops and interactive connection events throughout September and October 2016.

The name embodies the intent of the service, which is to provide an independent voice *from* children and young people to the care system, rather than an adult voice *for* these children and young people.

The logo was likewise designed with the input, and insight, of care experienced children and young people. It is comprised of multi-coloured sound waves, to visually represent the individual and collective voices of children in care, with the semi-circle shape symbolising connection and community.

VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai's primary functions are to connect children and young people in care, to advocate for their needs, promote a positive care identity, build leadership, and create a 'community of care' around each child. Over time, services will be increasingly led, governed and delivered directly by people with a care experience.

The service will be formally established on 1 April 2017 as a Non-Government Organisation (charitable trust), with recruitment now underway for a Chief Executive to lead the new service. VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai will be the first of its kind in New Zealand, as there is currently no advocacy service specifically for children and young people who are or have been in care.

The service is being set up in partnership with care experienced children and young people, four philanthropic funders (The Tindall Foundation, Foundation North, Todd Foundation and Vodafone Foundation), Government through the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki, and NGOs such as Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services and Dingwall Trust.

"This is a project that is close to our hearts at The Tindall Foundation. We're excited to have been involved in this partnership, and especially to work closely with young people on something that is so important to them and really needed in the care system," says John McCarthy, The Tindall

Foundation Manager and Chair of the Connection and Advocacy Service Establishment Steering Group.

The focus of Government funding is on core service provision, with the contribution of Philanthropy about impact investment, driving social change and embracing innovation.

“VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai will allow us to genuinely reflect young people’s views as we build Oranga Tamariki. Having this formal, independent service will keep Oranga Tamariki on track, and I am committed to ensuring the voices of children and young people are embedded in our decision making. We have much to achieve, and the stories of young people’s experiences will guide the way we work, and be at the heart of everything we do,” says Gráinne Moss, Chief Executive of the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki.

The service will use a combined approach of direct service delivery and strategic partnering, and will need to work closely with iwi, urban Māori organisations and Māori leaders to ensure services effectively respond to the needs of Māori children and young people.

When it is launched at the beginning of April 2017, VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai will operate from a national centre in Auckland, supported by a social media platform and network of local partners and communities. Over the next four years, services will expand to include an intensive individual advocacy function with strong networks and regional hubs throughout the country.

For further information or other requests, please contact Andrew Hobbs, Advisor with the VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai project team, on either phone 09 909 4512, mobile 029 200 1538 or email [andrew.hobbs002@cyf.govt.nz](mailto:andrew.hobbs002@cyf.govt.nz)

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