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National Professional Association for Youth Workers Launches Today

Youth work in Aotearoa has a rich history, a strong present and an exciting future. Today, the youth development sector celebrates the launch of a professional association for youth workers, built by youth workers.

“Youth work is an important part of the ecosystem that will support our young people to thrive,” says Simon Mareko, chair of Ara Taiohi’s Pathways to Professionalisation working group and member of the Ara Taiohi board. “What’s exciting is how youth workers across the country have been part of a ground-breaking, participatory process of design. Ara Taiohi are proud to have supported a process that genuinely reflects the innovative, rights based and strengths based practice of youth work in Aotearoa. We know this because nearly 600 youth workers have been part of the journey.”

Youth work is a community in Aotearoa that has strong foundations, built through the contribution and leadership of many people, networks and organisations. The professional association will work to uphold and uplift the mana of youth work, so the work that youth workers do can be valued alongside teachers, doctors, counsellors, social workers and nurses.

“This is a platform for youth workers to be connected, effective, ethical and accountable to one another, and to the communities and young people they work with. We’ve opened a space for youth workers to be part of the growth of the profession, and they’ve responded enthusiastically,” says Jane Zintl, the development manager for the association at Ara Taiohi. “We’ve had amazing input from individual youth workers around the country, and the wonderful networks and collectives around the country.”

“Young people across New Zealand need youth workers in 2017. The fundamental focus on positive, developmental relationships that sits at the heart of youth work practice is critical to our nation in the rebuild our system of care and in the way we support our young people to thrive in all dimensions of their life,” says Anya Satyanand, Executive Officer at Ara Taiohi, the peak body for youth development. “Growing up in Aotearoa right now is tough for many of our young people. The professional association is an important part of our work to create an Aotearoa where all young people thrive. Ara Taiohi have championed this work as part of our priorities on connecting the sector and raising the standards across the youth development sector.”

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Ara Taiohi is the peak body for youth development. We’re a national association for the youth development sector, representing both organisations and individuals who work with young people.