

BACKGROUND

Korowai Tupu is engaging with youth workers across the country to build awareness and engagement on professional Youth Work, how our existing structures are working for youth workers and for young people.

This paper provides a high-level overview of our current landscape, recent developments and how we are looking to move forward.

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

After extensive consultation, in 2017 Korowai Tupu, the professional association for youth workers in Aotearoa was launched. Youth workers continued to be primarily accountable to their organisation and can now choose to become members of Korowai Tupu for professional accountability. Being on the register of members for Korowai Tupu is a mark of high-quality Youth Work, gives you

access to a community of practice that is committed to professionalisation and creates opportunities to champion the profession.

Youth Work is currently a voluntary, self-regulated profession.

Current realities to navigate

- **Prioritisation:** Less than 10% of youth workers are members of Korowai Tupu.
- **Dire funding environment:** Managers and organisations identify limited resources as the key reason they are unable to cover professional costs, including membership of a professional association, training and supervision.
- **Stretched and stressed sector:** While youth workers are working with increasingly complex needs, the highest stressors for youth workers relate to funding and resource limitations (remuneration, time etc.).

- **Pay:** The majority of youth workers are paid below the NZ median wage.

Our goal is to see every young person in Aotearoa have access to safe, caring Youth Work practice to support their positive youth development. Under the guidance of the Korowai Tupu advisers, the sector has started to review our position on professional accountability, including exploring the option of more formal registration.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith Care contains recommendations relating to staff and care workers, including youth workers. This includes a recommendation that the government should consult on the scope and nature of the professional 'registration' system. This process is held by the Crown Response Unit and is expected to be a priority in 2026.

In 2025 Ara Taiohi, in partnership with AUT released Mahi Tūturu, a research report on the Landscape of Youth Work in Aotearoa. This consultation builds on the mātauranga contained in Mahi Tūturu.

The voice of youth workers and young people must inform any registration system.

NEXT STEPS

The purpose of this consultation is to build on our existing understanding of professionalisation to inform policy direction leading into the next election that clearly articulates the best system and structure to ensure young people's safety within youth work relationships.

See timeline below:



How to have your say: Scan this QR code to go to our website that has more information and links for you to contribute to our consultation.

Timeline

KEY ■ Work in progress

2024

2025

2026

➤ CONTINUOUSLY Actively engage with MP's (cross party), relevant government departments and other key stakeholders Regularly inform and check back with members Advocate for Whai Wāhitanga/youth voice

FEB '24

Korowai Tupu advisers start more focused kōrero around professionalisation

24 JUL '24

Release of Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith Care

NOV '24-AUG '25

Mahi Tūturu – 540 youth workers participate in research on the Landscape of Youth Work in Aotearoa

SEPT-NOV '25

Design of consultation materials

DEC '25-FEB '26

Survey released

FEB-APR '26

Tāhono 'road show' connects with kaimahi across the motu

APR-MAY '26

Development of Professionalisation Policy Directive based on all engagement

JUN-JUL '26

Leading into the 2026 election release of Professionalisation Policy Directive that articulates what is needed for every young person to have safe, caring Youth Work