

2020

WELCOME TO

WAIKATO

The beating heart of New Zealand

CONTINUING
THE CONVERSATIONS

Continuing the conversations

This report provides a snapshot of our community. It's a starting point in our shared journey to build 'A Better Waikato for Everyone, Forever'. Most importantly, it's a conversation starter, a motivator and a change generator for our communities. The more we talk about and share this information, the more potential it generates.

Statistics on their own don't tell the whole story. That's why community consultation is a crucial part of this Waikato Vital Signs® 2020 report. We wanted to know about the lives behind the numbers, to amplify their meaning by gathering the stories and viewpoints of real people in real places, and hear community views on their own strengths and challenges.

The Vital Signs® community engagement workshops in 2020 were interrupted by the COVID-19 crisis and restrictions. This meant the majority of our community workshop events had to be cancelled, although we were fortunate to hold two of them in Otorohanga and Te Kuiti in March. Instead, we sought feedback during April and May 2020 through the Waikato Vital Signs® 2020 online survey, to which 161 people from around the region replied.

The feedback we got was in-depth and full of insights about our region. People took the opportunity to talk about meaningful issues and aspirations for their community, at a time when the challenges of COVID-19 meant those things were even more front of mind.

Vital Signs® is used around the world to generate meaningful community conversations, and our aim is that this report will do just that for our region. Continued conversations between individuals and groups about the opportunities and challenges identified in this report will add to its value. We are planning a series of Waikato Vital Signs® 2020 supplements following the report's release, designed to add depth to the Impact Areas and community voices.

We look forward to seeing the positive impacts of Waikato Vital Signs® 2020, the conversations it generates, and our collective progress towards a flourishing, thriving Waikato Region for all.



Vital Impact success – Pūniu River Care

The first edition of Waikato Vital Signs® back in 2016 was used to inform Momentum Waikato's inaugural Vital Impact grants round, which saw three changemaking organisations receive substantial funding support delivered via a partnership model over the following three to four years.

The stand-out success story from that first outing is Pūniu River Care (PRC), an ecological restoration enterprise based at a nursery at the Mangatoatoa Pā at Tokanui and an office in Te Awamutu.

The stats around PRC's core mission are impressive. Their 2015 pilot effort propagated and planted 8000 trees in a year. After the Vital Impact program funded the expansion of their nursery operation, they were able to immediately jump to 110,000 trees a year and have since climbed to 250,000 trees planted over 2019.

Spokesperson Talitha Wanden says they now have a proven model for large-scale eco-sourced native tree propagation, planting and restoration projects.

"With its current resourcing and infrastructure, PRC is able to propagate and plant half a million eco-sourced native trees annually," she says.

At the same time, PRC provides marae-based employment and work experience opportunities for local people - their current workforce is 28, with 15 now being experienced horticulture and eco-restoration workers.

"We are driven by the vision of 'safe places, healthy water, healthy people'," says Talitha.



"PRC operates within a Kaupapa Māori framework and has developed organisational core values to encourage leadership in the workforce and in their whānau."

"With a strong focus on healing the whenua and healing the people, PRC reinforce the connection with papatuanuku to support a sense of belonging and connection through their work."

Chief Executive Shannon Te Huia says support from Sustainable Coastlines, a national environmental organisation, was critical at the outset in articulating the aspiration of PRC.

"Sustainable Coastlines helped to join the dots that connected us to Momentum Waikato, whose support then made it possible to secure the conditions of more targeted funding and take on planting contracts."

With the springboard of the Vital Impact seed funding, PRC was able to secure further support from a range of iwi, government and council sources, including Waikato-Tainui, the Waikato River Authority and the Waikato Regional Council. They are contracted by the Department of Corrections to plant the banks of the Pūniu where it passes through the prison farm at Waikeria, an effort that has recently contributed to the winning of three Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

Now PRC are offering their model to other marae around the rohe, pointing the way towards achieving transformational change in water quality across the Waikato.



Acknowledgements and thanks

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Waikato Vital Signs® Consultancy Report

The majority of the data for the Waikato Vital Signs® 2020 Report was gathered, collated and presented in the Waikato Vital Signs® Consultancy Report by Shefali Pawar for The National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis (NIDEA) at The University of Waikato.

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We are also grateful to various government agencies from whom data were sourced for this report. These include Statistics New Zealand, particularly the 'Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa – Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand' which are the most up-to-date data on key New Zealand social statistics. Datasets also came from Creative New Zealand, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Justice, Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education.

Community Engagement Workshops

Community Engagement Workshops were organised to take place in each of the Waikato's districts over March and early April 2020, however all but the Te Kuiti and Otorohanga events were cancelled at the last minute due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Thanks for this stage of the project goes to Lara Conroy for project management, Michelle Howie for workshop facilitation, Janice Lapwood, Amber Bremner and Maree McNulty for notetaking and facilitation support, and Mark Servian for promotion.

Plus thank you to those who distributed invites across the region, and the locals who attended the Te Kuiti and Otorohanga workshops.

Online Survey

With most of the workshops cancelled, the project's community engagement switched to an online survey, which was prepared and distributed by Mark Servian.

Thanks to David Smith at Gravity Lab for technical assistance and to those who distributed the invite.

Plus, a huge thank you to the 161 Waikato people who completed the survey, providing the many insightful quotes presented in this report.

Waikato Vital Signs® Report production

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