

## **Help Secure Kapiti's Vital Mental Health Services**

### **Te Ara Korowai - our essential mental health service under threat**

**“Ara (path) - Korowai (cloak) - a kaupapa, embracing the path of recovery with a cloak of support.”**

Te Ara Korowai Creative Wellbeing Centre in Raumati has been a lifeline for the Kāpiti community, providing essential mental health services for over a decade. However, with the loss of the Manatu Taonga CARE funding (COVID response recovery) from July 1st, they are now in a critical financial situation. With a 75% loss of income, this not-for-profit organisation needs our support to secure its future.

“We have access to smaller grants, which enables us to keep our doors open. But it will be at a reduced level of service. This is concerning because, for some, we are their only support or connection in the community. And the demand for our services is growing.” Sarah Yuile, Manager.

#### **Why support the centre?**

The centre, a nurturing, peer-led initiative, provides creative and wellbeing classes to promote positive mental health. The majority of tutors, the management team, and the board have experience with mental health challenges, fostering a sense of understanding and community empowerment.

“We work alongside those experiencing mental health distress and those with intellectual disabilities, with a focus on recovery. Our classes provide opportunities for support, connection and participation with skill-based activities.”

Currently, the 2024 programme offers a range of classes, including creative writing, cooking, yoga, meditation, dance, and art. But if more funding isn't forthcoming, the hard decision must be made - pulling courses from the schedule.

#### **The pathway to recovery**

“We differ from traditional ‘day services’ where people are dropped off in the morning and collected again in the afternoon. Members come here for meaningful activities and participate in classes they feel engaged in.”

Te Ara Korowai's kaupapa (purpose) as a pathway has a high success rate for recovery. Members come when in dire need and thrive with the right support and commitment. Some become volunteers or paid staff at the centre, while others pursue their own career aspirations.

One recent success story involves an art tutor who turned her life around. Once in a dark space, she's now flourishing teaching, with a second job at a local cattery. When she first arrived, paid employment was inconceivable, let alone having two jobs. This may sound inconsequential to some, but those who understand her battles understand the significance.

These journeys to recovery are the reason this centre exists. Sarah and the team help those struggling with mental health conditions to become active members of the community. Individuals gain purpose and confidence while connecting with their family and friends, which is why those running the charity do what they do.

## **Critical support for those in need**

You may be surprised to learn that Te Ara Korowai is the only community mental health centre in the wider Kāpiti area. It provides immediate support for those in need without referrals or lengthy wait lists. Given the overburdened and under-resourced public health system, the centre ensures vital assistance to many members awaiting clinical mental health services.

Mental health conditions cost us dearly, socially and economically; as a country, we are falling short. A 2018 report commissioned by the OECD concluded that although “awareness and policy thinking is well developed in New Zealand...structural and institutional weaknesses limit the provision of timely integrated health and employment services.”

It also raised that despite the awareness around such failures (in addressing problems), it was a reflection of the stigma and discrimination still attached to a person's mental health. So, while the system fails those most vulnerable in our community, we must step up and share the burden.

## **How can you help?**

You can support Te Ara Korowai Creative Wellbeing Centre in several ways, including making a one-off or monthly donation. If you are a business, consider holding a Mental Health Day and encourage your team to wear something bright and cheerful with a gold coin donation. Or do you have something lying around the house? Why not post it on Trade Me or Marketplace with the hashtag #savetearakorowai and donate the proceeds. Times are tough. Still, every dollar collected will help keep this essential community mental health service afloat.

Visit their ‘3 Years’ exhibition, which opens on 6 June 2024. It showcases the amazing work that can be achieved when our creative spaces are adequately funded. ([Ministry for Culture and Heritage](#)).

Give a little page [www.givealittle.co.nz/org/te-ara-korowai-inc](http://www.givealittle.co.nz/org/te-ara-korowai-inc)

Become a Friend of Te Ara Korowai: Te Ara Korowai Incorporated 38-9008-0843804-00

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