



Ngā Pūtake O Te Ora

Nurturing the Roots of Wellbeing
and Empowerment

IMPACT REPORT 2019-2024

Our Mission

To see families and
their communities
become healthier,
more independent,
autonomous and
sustainable



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Executive Summary

WERA Aotearoa Charitable Trust (WACT) has been a constant and enduring presence in Rotorua for more than 16 years, having a profound impact on the community through its need-driven kaupapa.

The past five years, in particular, have seen Rotorua and the wider rohe navigate a vastly changing social climate, with WACT stepping up to deliver a wide range of support services across housing, employment, youth services, education, and offender reintegration.

Operating within the same organisation has allowed WACT's service teams to work closely together, ensuring the whole individual is supported, and limiting the need for vulnerable people and whānau to move between organisations to get the help they need.

WACT's core purpose is to support the financial, cultural, social and educational wellbeing of individuals, their families and local communities.

To achieve this, bespoke programmes and services have been developed that not only work for the specific communities WACT operates within, but can be used as a blueprint for communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

In 2019, WACT focused on enhancing community engagement and support, offering workshops and training sessions to improve skills and education opportunities.

The educational programmes provided for youth development and leadership, coupled with collaborations with local schools, resulted in better academic achievement among rangatahi in WACT programmes, most notably, the 91 students who achieved NCEA Level 1-3.

WACT also sponsored 15 underprivileged students to attend their school ball – an opportunity that allowed them to feel confident, strengthen their connection to their peers, and feel rewarded for their academic achievements.

In 2020, WACT supported a further 69 students to achieve NCEA Level 1-3, and placed 21 rangatahi into education.

At the height of COVID-19, WACT mobilised quickly to establish its housing team, supporting homeless and displaced individuals and families. The organisation received 36 referrals in this time, and of those, progressed 15 families out of emergency housing within the same year.



2020 also saw WACT continue its work with offenders, both within the system and reintegrated into the community. WACT carried out more than 100 cultural assessments for Māori offenders and doubled its capacity to deliver Tiaki Tangata – a reintegration service designed to fully support offenders to safely and permanently re-enter society.

Demand for housing support grew exponentially between 2020 and 2021, with WACT receiving 111 referrals in 2021. Of these, nearly 70 per cent were successfully transitioned out of emergency housing and into a rental or boarding property within the same year.

Youth programmes also grew and evolved as WACT identified new and enduring challenges being faced by rangatahi.

Exemplifying its needs-based programme development, WACT supported more than 100 rangatahi with a range of services in 2021, including budgeting, driver's licencing and parenting courses.

In the past two years, WACT added community-based employment services to its quiver, establishing its Innovation Hub, out of which several workshops, wānanga, and programmes have been delivered to help individuals become work-ready.

As a result, 44 individuals have sustained full-time employment, and countless others have upskilled in industry-based training, CV and job preparedness, and job search training.

During the last quarter of 2023, WACT was also funded to deliver its Māori Trades Training programme, with a focus on the building and construction, and tourism and hospitality industries.

Over the past five years, WACT's intuitive programmes and empathetic kaimahi (workers), guided by te ao Māori principles, have significantly improved social outcomes across the rohe, leading to hundreds of vulnerable individuals and families living healthier, self-sustaining lives.

WACT's unique approach to social services, and its ethos of offering a hand up, not a hand out, has undeniably contributed to a more resilient, educated and self-sustaining community.

The following report aims to highlight this contribution and the ongoing impact WACT has had on the community as a whole.



Who are we?

Enabling strong, solid, and self-supporting communities underpins everything WACT has strived towards since its inception in 2007.

The vision of Israel and Teresa Hawkins, WACT has evolved from the WERA ecosystem, growing to meet the changing needs of whānau and the communities we live in.

This ecosystem encompasses a range of values-driven organisations, each with its own aspirations and tikanga, but drawing mauri from our core purpose – driving greater outcomes that benefit our communities.

The inception of the WERA ecosystem started with WERA Consultants – a private business development consultancy set up in 2005. The business and community needs identified through this kaupapa led to the natural progression of three other private companies – FIXE; an IT software company, Atawhai; an early childhood centre, and Takitini; a private training institute.

While these organisations have continued to thrive in their own right, the WERA ecosystem has never lost sight of the overarching purpose – helping whānau and communities.

This driving force saw the genesis of WACT; a not-for-profit organisation delivering services that support the financial, social and educational needs and wellbeing of individuals and whānau.

Since then, WACT has grown and evolved, drawing from the knowledge learned throughout the WERA journey, and finding stability and its own independence in the network of supporting organisations sustaining its kaupapa.

WACT now provides housing support, employment training, youth, health and education services, delivering wrap-around care and support for those who need it.

With a proven track record of delivering positive community impacts, WACT is well positioned with a strong foundation to continue addressing the changing needs of whānau, resulting in better outcomes for everyone.





Wera Aotearoa Charitable Trust (WACT)

Wera Aotearoa Charitable Trust (WACT) WACT is a non-profit charitable trust providing services for local whānau and communities with the aim of seeing ‘communities being solid, strong and self-supporting’. This is the beating heart of everything we do to serve and support our communities.

Innovation HUB

The innovation hub offers upskilling and employment services, including educational development, employment / training opportunities and pastoral care.



Housing – Toku Kainga

WACT housing services deliver a high standard of housing solutions that meet the needs of various cohorts within our communities.

Reintegration

WACT provides Tiaki Tangata, a service to support long serving offenders being released from prison to successfully transition and reintegrate back into the community.

Youth Worker Training scheme

WACT delivers educational training for kamahi / taiohi within the Central North Island with the focus on empowering those in attendance to different methods of best practise for the sector.

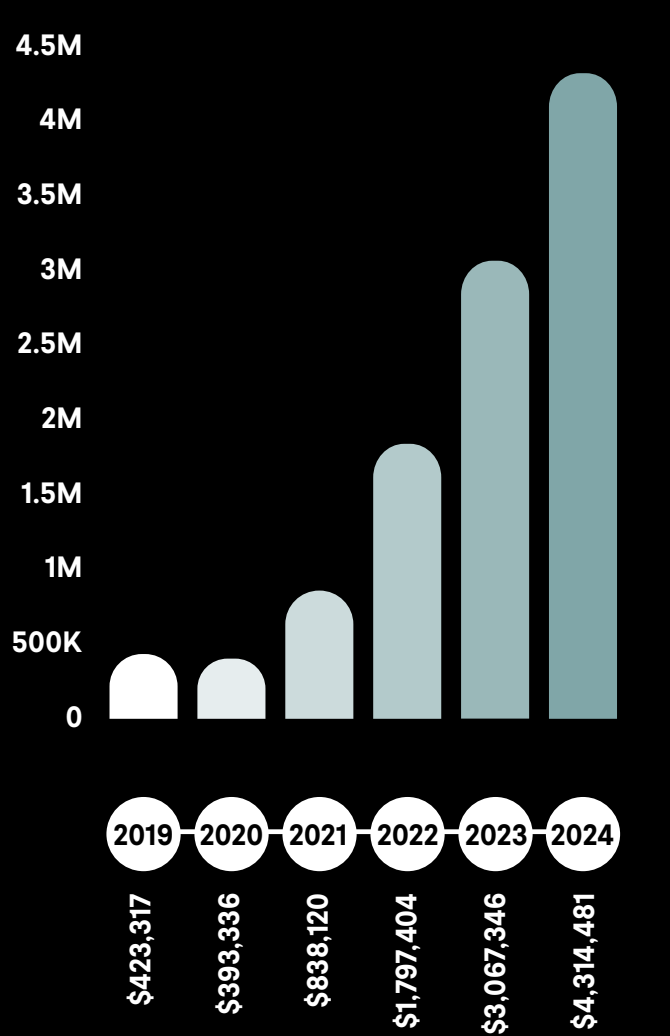
Youth & Whanau

WACT Youth Service provides support, activities, and resources to empower young people to develop skills, build confidence, and navigate challenges in their personal and social lives.

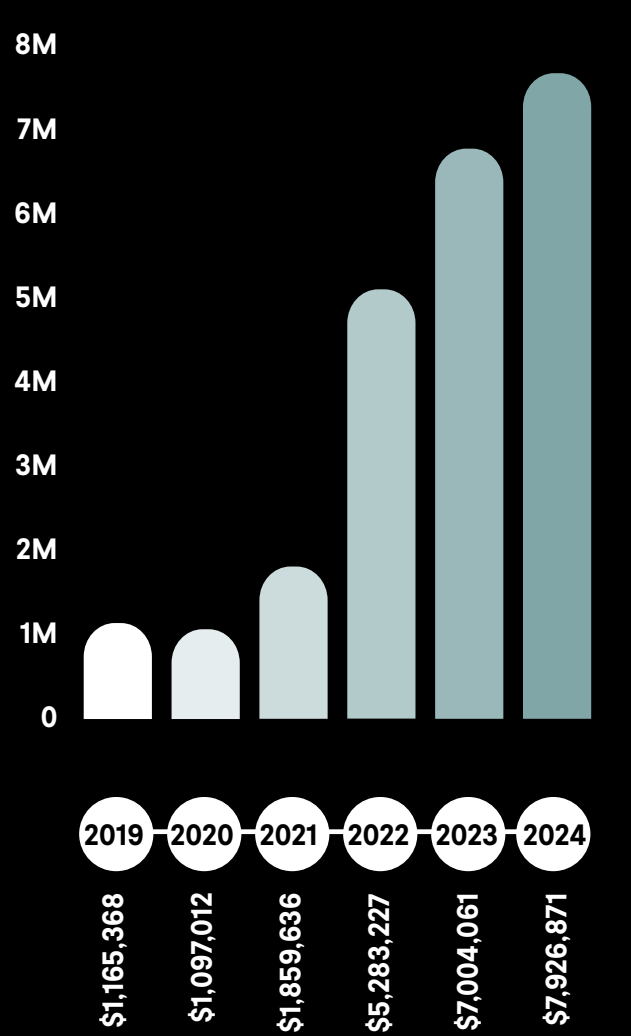
Financial Performance



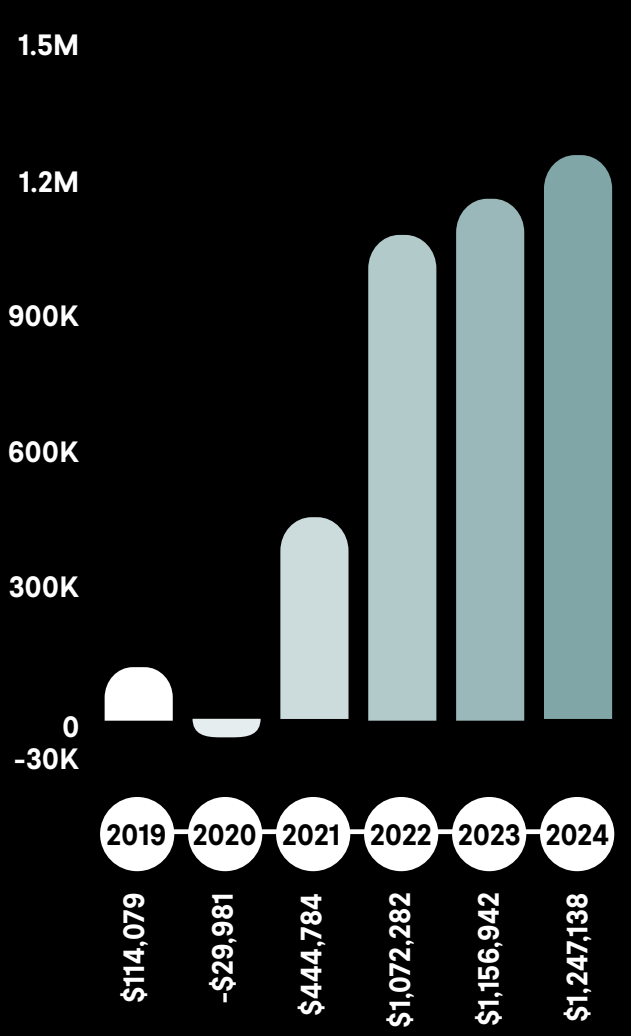
Net Assets



Exchange Revenue



Surplus/Deficit

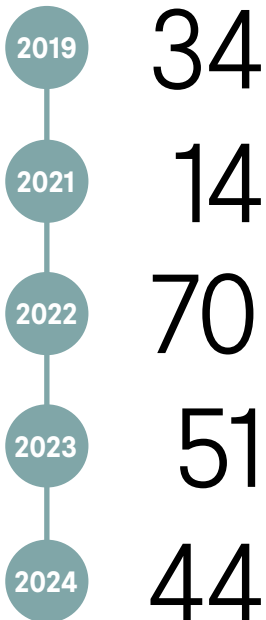


Social Impact and Outcomes



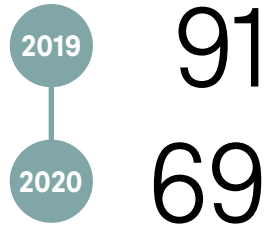
Training

Rangatahi supported to gain a driver's licences



Education

Students supported to achieve NCEA

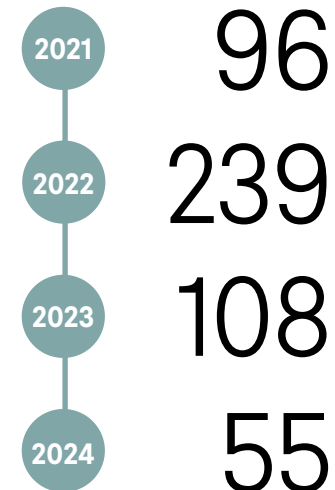


Health and Wellness
Vaccinations administered



Employment

Acceptance into work confidence, work ready, and employment placement programmes

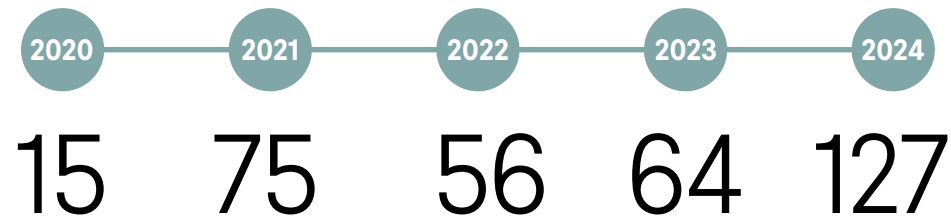




Housing

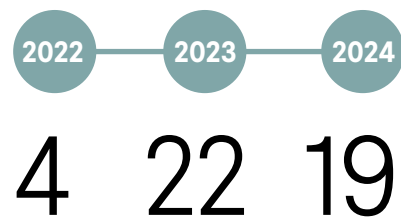
Contracted Emergency Housing

Whānau progressed to next stage of sustainable housing

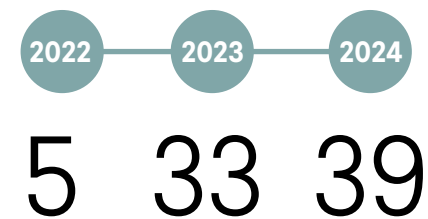


Transitional Housing

Whānau housed

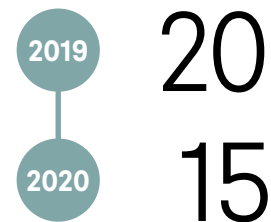


Available whare



Youth Worker Training

Students completed Certificate in Youth Work

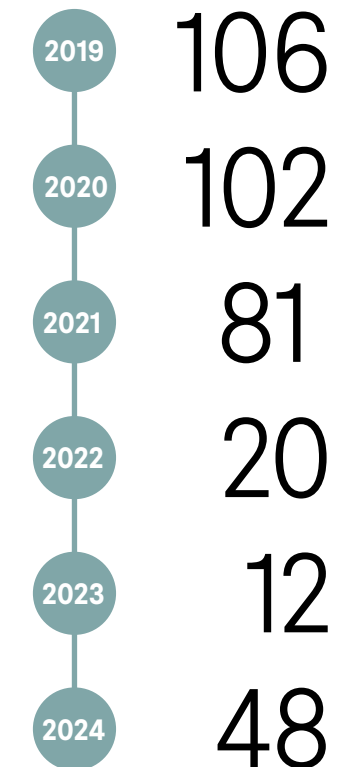


Students completed Diploma in Social Services



Reintegration

Cultural assessments completed



Kaupapa

Ko te puawaitanga
o nga moemoea
me whakamahi

*Dreams become
a reality when we
take action*



Employment

The WACT Innovation Hub empowers individuals to gain permanent employment by arming them with the confidence, training, and career opportunities needed to succeed.

Funded through government contracts and NGOs, the Innovation Hub is committed to making a tangible difference in the lives of local families.

This service underscores the transformative power of employment and the importance of upskilling in fostering sustainable economic growth and personal development.

Central to the Innovation Hub's mission is the Māori Whanau Work Confidence and Employment Placement Service, made up of:

- Work Confidence Wānanga
- Work Ready Initiative
- Employment Placements

The Work Confidence Wānanga is a three-day motivational training programme designed to reintegrate individuals into the workforce or training opportunities. This programme builds self-esteem and prepares participants for the challenges and opportunities of the job market.

The Work Ready Initiative tailors training needs to specific industries, ensuring individuals acquire the relevant skills to meet the demands of local employers.

The Employment Placement service provides ongoing pastoral care and support, enabling

long-term job retention and satisfaction.

The impact of these services on the community is profound. By improving employment outcomes through sustainable work, WACT enhances the work readiness of those who go through the Hub, their ability to participate meaningfully in society, and promotes equity of outcomes, particularly for Māori.

As the services evolve to meet the needs of the community, so too does the awareness of and access to support services, ensuring participants are well-equipped to navigate their career paths.

During the last quarter of 2023, WACT expanded its offerings with the launch of the Māori Trade Training programme and the Whakawatea he Poutama Rangatahi (Mau Mahi Mau Motuhake - 4MS Project).

The Māori Trade Training programme focuses on building and construction, as well as tourism and hospitality — industries that are vital to the local GDP and are recovering steadily post-COVID.

Through collaborations with employers, the programme aligns training with industry standards and qualifications, enhancing employability and career progression for participants.

The 4MS Project addresses the needs of rangatahi, specifically those linked to gangs. This kaupapa prepares young people for the workforce, offering them the option to transition into the Māori Trade Training programme once they are ready for employment.


By providing these opportunities, the project helps rangatahi explore and secure positions within key trade industries, paving the way for a brighter future.

The Hub's comprehensive, holistic, and supportive approach to employment and training has already yielded significant positive outcomes since it was established.

In 2023, more than half (59%) sustained fulltime employment through the employment placement programme, on top of the 41% who entered the workforce via the same programme in 2022.

More than 150 individuals have taken part in the Work Confidence Wānanga between 2022/23, and 101 were accepted into the Work Ready Programme.

Through these efforts, WACT continues to make a lasting impact on the community, transforming lives through the power of employment and upskilling.



He aroha whakatō,
he aroha ka puta
mai

*If kindness is sown,
then kindness you
shall receive*

Housing

Established at the height of COVID-19, WACT's housing services have been instrumental in providing emergency and transitional housing to whānau experiencing chronic homelessness.

These services are supported by government contracts and aim to mitigate barriers to long-term accommodation while offering pathways for rent readiness and tenancy sustainability.

WACT's housing services are built on the Nga Pou e Rima foundation, which ensures a holistic approach to supporting families and individuals.

The service encompasses short-term accommodation, navigation, support, rent readiness, housing assessment and planning, mentoring, advocacy, and ongoing evaluation and reflection.

This comprehensive, holistic approach to housing is designed to reduce the number of people facing hardship, improve people's ability to meaningfully participate in society, and promote equity of outcomes, particularly for Māori.

The rent readiness programme recognises that, oftentimes, intergenerational trauma prevents people from learning the basic life skills needed to live independently. This programme prepares whānau for private tenancies by educating them on their rights and responsibilities, preparing them for landlord interviews, and providing practical skills in home budgeting and maintaining a healthy home.

As a result, whānau become motivated to seek housing in the private rental market, reducing their reliance on motels or public housing waiting lists.

The assessment and planning phase supports whānau transitioning from emergency to longer-term housing. This involves settling into new accommodation, assessing immediate needs, and preparing individual action and transition plans addressing health, social, employment, and financial needs.

WACT works with approved organisations to facilitate this transition, using expert knowledge and proven resources, like the Nga Pou e Rima Cultural Framework, micro counselling, and deflection questioning, to identify and mitigate barriers.

Mentoring is another crucial aspect of WACT's housing services. Continuous evaluation and reflection help WACT adapt to the changing needs of whānau, celebrating achievements and successes from a whānau perspective.

The outcomes achieved by WACT's housing services underscore their impact. In 2023, 67 individuals were accepted into the rent readiness programme, with 48 attending and completing the workshops, compared to 34 accepted and 21 completing in 2022. The contracted emergency housing service saw 64 whānau progress to sustainable housing in 2023, up from 56 in 2022, with occupancy rates at 68% as of June 30, 2023, down from 97% in 2022.

Transitional housing outcomes also reflect significant growth, with 33 whare available in 2023, housing 22 whanau, compared to just 5 whare and 4 whanau housed in 2022.

Sustaining tenancies saw 32 individuals accepted into the service in 2023, down from 52 in 2022, indicating a focus on quality and tailored support for those with the greatest needs.

Through these dedicated efforts, WACT has made substantial contributions to the community, reducing homelessness, securing tenure for vulnerable households, and improving overall wellbeing. These services not only provide immediate relief but also foster long-term stability and growth for whānau in Rotorua.

Youth and Whānau

WACT has made significant strides in enhancing the wellbeing and economic independence of rangatahi through its comprehensive youth programme.

WACT's youth coaches play a crucial role in engaging and supporting young individuals, helping them achieve sustained education, training, work-based learning, or employment outcomes. By focusing on these areas, the programmes aims to foster long-term economic independence among rangatahi.

Youth Mentoring

Youth mentoring provides targeted support to rangatahi aged 16-18 years who are in school, training, or seeking entry into the workforce.

Regular visits to local high schools and kura kaupapa by youth coaches ensure students receive consistent guidance and motivation. This hands-on approach helps keep rangatahi engaged in their education and training pathways, contributing to their overall wellbeing and aspirations.

NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training)

WACT's NEET service is dedicated to helping young individuals develop career plans and prepare for future career pathways.

This targeted intervention is crucial in preventing rangatahi from falling through the cracks and ensuring they have the support needed to transition into productive and fulfilling careers.

Youth and Young Parent Payment

The Youth and Young Parent Payment service provides critical financial support to young people aged 16-18 who cannot live with their parents or guardians and are not supported by them.

Additionally, the programme extends support to young parents aged 16-19 who have tamariki in their care, enabling them to return to school, complete training or enter the workforce.

By supporting these young parents, WACT helps ensure that they can provide a stable and nurturing environment for their children while pursuing their educational and career goals.

Youth Worker Training

WACT's commitment to strengthening the youth work profession is evident in its Youth Worker Training service.

This programme aims to increase opportunities for youth workers in the region to access professional qualifications, providing a clear training pathway and maximising their chances of success.

Between 2019 and 2021, 58 students graduated with either a Certificate in Youth Work, or a Diploma in Social Services.

In 2023, the programme saw a significant increase in training workshops, workshop attendees, and regional hui participants, highlighting growing demand.

Through these comprehensive services, WACT has significantly contributed to the wellbeing and economic independence of rangatahi across the rohe. The programmes not only support individual growth and development but also strengthen the community by ensuring that its rangatahi are well-prepared to contribute positively to society.



Ko te piko o te
māhuri, tērā te
tupu o te rākau

*The way the
sapling is shaped
determines how
the tree will grow*

Reintegration

Supporting offenders upon their release from prison is crucial for fostering a safer and more inclusive New Zealand.

WACT's Correction services are funded by government contracts and are made up of three components:

Tiaki Tangata

Tiaki Tangata has been designed to fully support offenders to safely and permanently re-enter society.

This includes providing access to housing and employment opportunities, and developing a reintegration plan with each tane, ensuring their specific needs are met.

Incorporating te ao Māori worldviews into the programme's delivery, WACT is helping tane reconnect with their cultural identity while providing the pillars to stabilise their lives, and in turn, reduce the risk of reoffending.

Securing stable housing is vital for personal growth and integration back into the community and supporting tane to become work-ready helps instil a sense of purpose and belonging.

By addressing these fundamental needs, WACT endeavours to break the cycle of reoffending and promote a more productive and cohesive society.

Between 2021 and 2023, 58 tane were accepted to the Tiaki Tangata programme and of those men:

- 75% successfully transitioned back into the community
- 68% did not reoffend
- 67% gained long-term accommodation
- 39% maintained employment

Hokai Tapuwae

Hokai Tapuwae provides specialist Māori Cultural Assessments to help reconnect offenders to their culture and whānau networks to enable them to address reoffending.

Since 2019, more than 300 assessments have been completed in 19 facilities across the Central North Island.

Tikanga Wānanga

The third programme in WACT's Correction services - Tikanga Wānanga - are group-based sessions delivered across three days in a marae setting.

Harnessing Māori philosophy, values, knowledge and practices, these wānanga aim to foster the regeneration of Māori identity and values, helping tane understand their offending and increase their interest in engaging with other cultural interventions that will reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

In 2022 and 2023, 11 wānanga were held, with 69 participants completing the course.

Investing in the successful reintegration of offenders is a proactive approach that benefits not only the individuals but also the wider community. It reduces crime rates, alleviates the burden on the justice system, and contributes to a more resilient New Zealand.



Case Studies



Practical skills boost confidence for aspiring tradesmen

Korbyn Kiore and Kayden Andersen are prime examples of rangatahi thriving when given the right training, resources and support before entering the workforce.

Both young men leapt at the opportunity to join WACT Innovation Hub's 12-week Māori Trade Training Course, knowing it would help prepare them for the workforce.

During the programme, WACT Innovation Hub provides in-person sessions on budgeting, interview techniques, CV and cover letter writing, employability skills, tikanga Māori concepts and general support.

Vertical Horizons, which partners with WACT, breaks up the workshop sessions with practical courses, including forklift, first aid, manual handling, site safety, working at heights and more.

And a partnership between WACT and local construction company, McMillan and Lockwood, made the course even more valuable, allowing rangatahi to complete a two-week placement on a worksite after graduation.

When Korbyn and Kayden completed their two-week placement, making their mark and quickly impressing the right people with their commitment, they were asked to stay on and test out some of the other trades working on the same site.

Employment Navigator Gloria Newton says seeing their progression has been awesome.

“We couldn't be prouder of these boys, they've shown confidence, dedication and, above all, a willingness and strong desire to learn.

“When we see rangatahi thrive, like Korbyn and Kayden, it's all worth it and I quickly remember exactly why we do what we do.”

Kayden says the course has improved his confidence in so many ways.

“During the course, we've gained lots of practical tickets for forklift driving, first aid and working at heights, but I've also learnt a lot about communication and work ethic which has improved my confidence and helped me feel prepared for mahi.”

Korbyn says he is excited to keep learning and figure out what trade he wants to pursue.

“I'm so glad I did the course with WACT, and I'd recommend it to anyone feeling a bit lost or like they need some extra support. I wanted to make a change, so I put my hand up and my head down, and now it's paying off.”

A life transformed by second chances and cultural roots

Jack* didn't have an easy childhood. Growing up in a gang environment, his home was frequently raided by police, and by the age of 8, he was already selling drugs.

With undiagnosed dyslexia, school was a daily struggle, and by age 12, he dropped out, feeling lost and overlooked by the system.

The brightest light in his life was his nan, who lived down the road. When she passed, Jack dealt with his grief in the only way he knew how – with anger.

This boiled over when Jack, after an altercation at an out-of-control party, was arrested and ultimately convicted of murder.

Going to prison for the first time, Jack thought he would be supported with resources and tools to help him address his challenges and help him rehabilitate.

However, he quickly learned he was not eligible for the relevant programmes as he had no prior criminal record.

Instead, Jack spent the next 13 years feeling forgotten, disconnected from his culture, disillusioned with the system, and wondering how life would be any different “outside the wire”.

In 2021, that all changed when Jack was introduced to Huia Clayton, a case manager at WACT.

Huia didn't just help Jack with his parole hearings – he opened a door to a path Jack had long since lost: the path back to his whakapapa.

Enrolled in WACT's tikanga courses, Jack began to reconnect with his cultural identity, gaining new motivation to understand the roots of his offending and break free from the cycle of anger and alienation.

“I was actually brought up in a te ao Māori environment, but I lost that in prison. Huia and WACT guided me back into that space, supporting me the whole time. WACT knew what to do to help us get a better life.”

Today, Jack's life is a testament to the power of second chances. He's out of prison, drug and alcohol-free, and working fulltime in Rotorua. His home is now a sanctuary for his nephews and nieces, and he takes immense pride in being a positive role model for his entire whānau.

“It wasn't until I met Huia that I realised I could be something else. I wouldn't be here today without him and I will always be thankful for him coming into my life.”





League rising star given hand up to achieve her dream

Tokoroa teen, Alexis, always knew she was athletically gifted, but the thought of turning her talent into a career seemed no more than a dream.

Now, thanks to WACT's youth services programme fund, that dream is becoming a reality, with Alexis qualifying and competing in eight rugby league campaigns on both national and international stages.

At one point, the 17-year-old wasn't sure she was going to finish school with a qualification. She'd struggled with the academic side and the stress saw her stop attending class.

Then she started talking to some visiting WACT Youth Coaches and was soon enrolled in the programme.

With the "major support" the team provided, Alexis has gone on to gain NCEA level 1 and 2, her learners and restricted licences, and her OSH forklift certificate.

"They were all opportunities I never thought I'd have. It was such a relief to pass NCEA and know I had options when I left school," Alexis says.

"But what I really want to do is have a sports career. My happy place is being on the field and WACT helped me to get the funding to compete in campaigns.

"I now play league for school and three clubs, and feel so good about representing my country internationally."

Alexis says the youth service team have always been friendly and welcoming, making participating in the programme easy.

"They're all really relatable and don't talk down to us. If I hadn't joined the programme, I wouldn't have gotten my licences, or gone on as many league campaigns, and for that, I'll always be grateful."

Alexis regularly volunteers at local youth week events, using her transformative story to inspire other rangatahi to break down barriers and not be afraid to dream big.

Her journey stands as a powerful reminder that no matter the challenges rangatahi face, it's possible to rise above and thrive.

Solo dad's journey leads to permanent home for his family

When Marsden Stanley found himself in emergency housing, he knew he needed to turn his life around for not only his sake, but the sake of his children.

However, after years without any support, advice, or guidance, he was at a loss as to how to make the change.

Coming under WACT's wing, Marsden was shown a positive path forward that didn't involve gangs, prison, and addiction, and, despite his initial self-doubt, he whole-heartedly embarked on the journey.

His resilience and determination saw Marsden stick to his goals of self-sufficiency, despite having to navigate complex personal situations and caring for his two younger siblings.

Less than a year after becoming a WACT client, Marsden secured a private rental and is a committed solo father and father figure to his siblings.

"Straight up, without WACT's help, I wouldn't be in the position I am in today. When I jumped under WACT, everything started happening for me straight away.

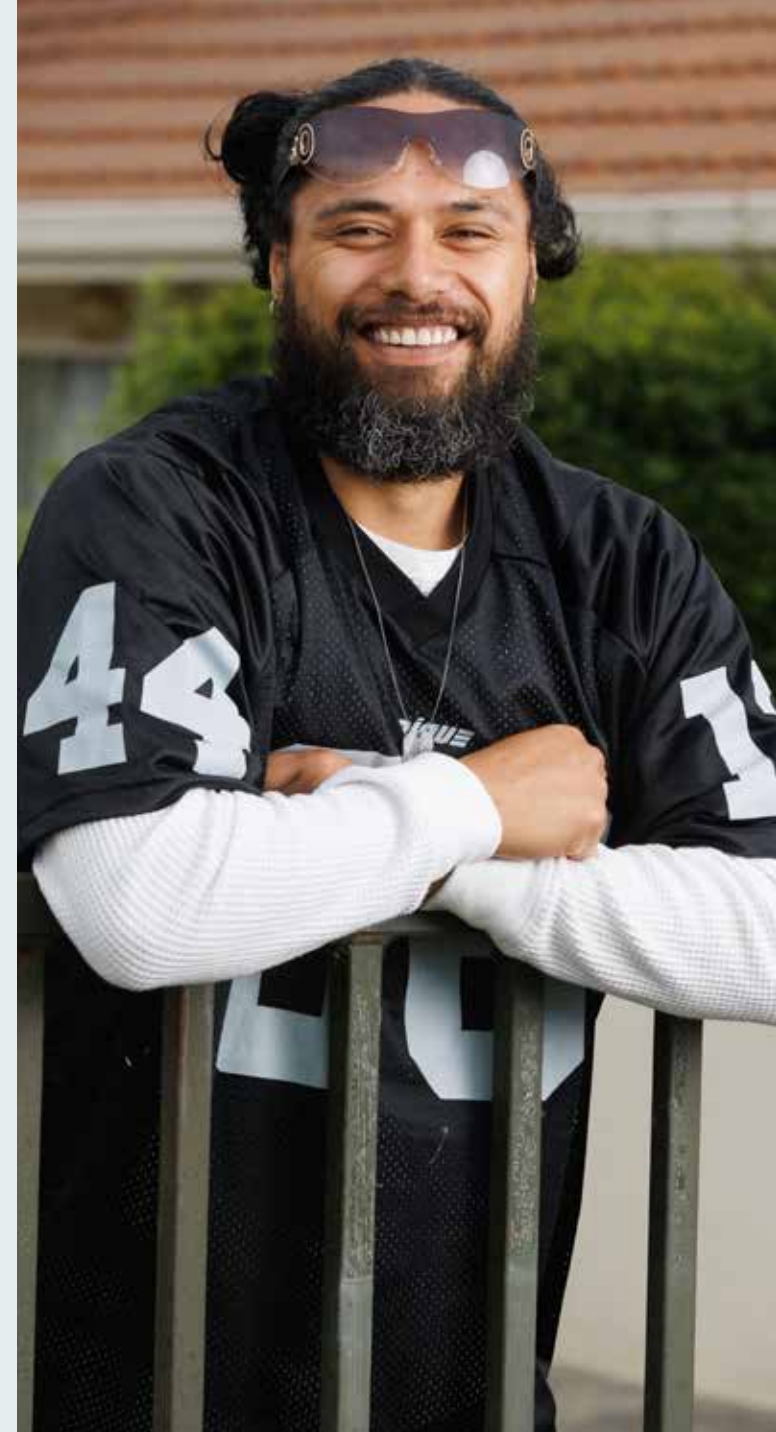
"The team has supported me the whole way through, being there whenever I needed them. When I met Rawiri, he was super real with me, there were no lies or fake promises. That's what I've liked the most, they all give it to you straight."

Marsden says once WACT had shown him the way forward, he ran with it.

"I was so determined to get a house; it was stressful, I was walking the hot streets every day going to rental viewings, but when I got my house, I knew it was all worth it.

"My son is in my care and he is doing so well. He was with me in the motel, and I had him in kindy that whole time, but I love giving him our own place.

"I can't say how thankful I am that I ended up with WACT, they supported me every step of the way, and now I'm 32 and finally living my best life."



Board and Senior Management Team



Jonathon Hagger
Chairperson



Norm Carter
Trustee



Mawera Karetai
Trustee



Janine Horton
Trustee



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