

Media Release
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“Whānau Pack” overwhelmingly approved by Waikato parents, teens and schools

A resource designed to keep parents and their teenagers up-to-date with issues affecting young New Zealanders has been given the universal thumbs up, the Public Health Association conference was told today.

Jacqueline Henry, research and evaluation project manager for Population Health at the Waikato District Health Board spoke to delegates in Dunedin about the “Whānau Pack” resource.

She said the Whānau Pack booklet was distributed to 20,000 Waikato secondary school students last year, in a collaboration between Population Health, police, public health nurses and schools.

“We have 54,000 10 to 19-year-olds in Waikato and the booklet filled a gap in information and advice on health and staying safe that was needed.

“The Whānau Pack was aimed at students and their parents so it covered a number of issues, from advice on alcohol and drugs, to parenting, nutrition and safe driving. It gave practical advice to parents about things like holding parties. There were also contact lists of community agencies that were ‘localised’ to each of five Waikato districts.”

This year, Ms Henry and her research partner, Dulcie Paina, held focus groups with parents and teens from the Māori, Pacific, migrant, refugee and other communities to get feedback on the booklet. They also talked to community agencies and schools who received the resource.

“The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The down-to-earth nature of the advice, the local contacts list, even the pictures in the booklet of local teens gave people the sense this was ‘their’ resource. It was praised both as something parents could leaf through now and again, and as a great resource in a crisis.

“Adding to the charm of the resource is the fact that it originated at a grass roots level in Te Kuiti with Population Health and north King Country organisation Te Ngaru o Maniapoto leading the way.”

Hilary Karaitiana of Population Health and Ken Wells of Te Ngaru o Maniapoto used their local knowledge to fulfil a need specific to their communities, developing the original Whānau Pack with students from the north King Country’s three high schools.

“The resource was so well respected and used in Waitomo and Otorohanga districts, that the direction came to share it with the whole Waikato DHB region. To see its growth has been fantastic.”

Ms Henry told the conference she’s now had interest in the resource from other parts of the country.

“Northland DHB and their community partners are well along the path of developing their own Whānau Pack and I think it has the potential to be developed nationwide.”

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