

# MEDIA RELEASE

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Comment can be attributed to John McCarthy, The Tindall Foundation Manager and Chair of the VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai Board, except where otherwise indicated.

## **Launch of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai connects children in care and amplifies their voices**

Care experienced children and young people are celebrating the official 1 April launch of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai, their independent connection and advocacy service, with a special event in Auckland this afternoon.

“Helping set up VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai and see it turn from an idea and a calling from children and young people, into reality, has been a real journey and a privilege,” says Monique Goodhew, a member of the service’s Board, and of the former Youth Advisory Panel to the Minister for Social Development. “I look forward to seeing how the service grows in the future; to connect and walk alongside children and young people in care to make sure they are listened to.”

VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai means ‘Voice of the Young and Care Experienced - Listen to me’.

More than 200 children, young people, their caregivers and members of the care community are attending the fun, child-focused launch event. Further special guests include Associate Minister for Children Alfred Ngaro, who is attending on behalf of Minister for Children Anne Tolley, Chief Executive of the new Oranga Tamariki, Gráinne Moss, and Children’s Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft. Representatives will also be attending from the Minister’s former Youth Advisory Panel, and current Council, Te Whānau Aroha.

Young people took a leading role in organising the event, arranging the MC’ing and invitations to speak, fantastic cultural performances, and special presentations to VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai’s partners. All the partners will be represented at the event; government, philanthropy (The Tindall Foundation, Vodafone Foundation New Zealand, Todd Foundation and Foundation North), NGOs (Dingwall Trust and Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services) and most especially the children and young people themselves.

“The launch of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai marks a milestone that in time will have a huge impact on the care system in New Zealand,” says John McCarthy, The Tindall Foundation Manager and Chair of the VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai Board. “Partnering with children and young people, and organisations from across philanthropy, the care sector, and government to design and set up this much needed service is an initiative the Tindall Foundation is proud to be part of.”

The service will connect children and young people in care through engaging events and activities to develop a sense of community and positive identity, and support them to advocate for their needs. It will also ensure their collective experiences and voices can influence Oranga Tamariki and the wider care system.

“It is my hope and my belief that VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai will help children and young people to connect to their culture, their roots, and to each other,” says Tupua Urlich, who is also a member of the service’s Board, and of the former Youth Advisory Panel. “Connection and culture is just so vital to children and young people, and is something that a lot of kids in care miss out on growing up, myself included, which is why I am so optimistic about the service and its promise to our tamariki.”

VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai will be starting small and focusing initially on building strong and sustainable connections with children and young people. Before it can fully begin its advocacy work, VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai must hear the voices of children and young people in care directly.

More formal phone and online advocacy functions will be established later in 2017, with regional teams and networks developed for connection and face-to-face advocacy across the country in 2018 and beyond.

“Children and young people fundamentally deserve to connect with each other and be listened to, and New Zealand’s care system has been crying out for a service like this for many years. We are absolutely ecstatic that VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai is now here to stand with young people, to ensure their voices are heard and respected,” says Tracie Shipton, Director of Dingwall Trust and a key member of the team behind VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai.

One of the core principles of the service is that it will actively build a care experienced community and promote a youth leadership approach. Over time, services will be increasingly led, governed and delivered directly by people with a care experience.

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

There will be an opportunity for media interviews with Minister Ngaro, young people who are comfortable sharing their stories, and representatives from VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai’s philanthropic and care sector NGO partners - **at the Auckland launch event between 2:30 and 3:00pm.**

For further information, contact Andrew Hobbs, Advisor with VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai, on either phone 09 909 4512, mobile 029 200 1538 or email [andrew.hobbs@voyce.org.nz](mailto:andrew.hobbs@voyce.org.nz)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- The members of the VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai initial Board are:
  - John McCarthy (Chair). John is the Manager of The Tindall Foundation, and the representative of the four philanthropic partners.
  - Liz Marsden. Liz is of Te-Whānau-a-Apanui and Ngāpuhi descent and General Manager of Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services (NISS).
  - Monique Goodhew. Monique is a care experienced young adult of Ngāti Porou and Te Rarawa descent. Monique is passionate about seeing changes in the care system that will benefit other children and young people who are still in care. Monique was recognised for her leadership through her nomination to the Minister’s Youth Advisory Panel in 2015.
  - Tupua Urlich. Tupua is a care experienced young adult of Ngāti Kahungunu Ki Heretaunga descent who came into care at age five. Since first speaking at the Voices of Children in Care hui in 2013, Tupua has regularly undertaken advocacy on behalf of children and young people in care, promoting their needs and rights, and in particular the importance for Māori children to be connected to their wider whānau, hapū and Iwi.
  - Zak Quor. Zak is a care experienced young adult based in Auckland. Since leaving foster care after approximately 12 years in 2010, Zak has helped in the adoption and fostering sector by speaking at conferences and events, providing ideas, information and insight into the world of youth in care in New Zealand
  - Abbie Reynolds. Abbie is the Executive Director of the Sustainable Business Council, and strong advocate for children, young people, and the environment.
- Oranga Tamariki is the Ministry replacing Child, Youth and Family, which was itself launched with an official event on 31 March. Visit [www.mvcot.govt.nz](http://www.mvcot.govt.nz) for more information.
- VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai has been set up as an NGO charitable trust, in partnership with care experienced children and young people, four philanthropic funders, NGOs and government. The focus of Government funding is on core service provision, with the contribution of Philanthropy about impact investment, driving social change and embracing innovation.
- VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai’s national centre will initially be located in Papatoetoe in South Auckland. Locations for the regional hubs will be based on demand from children and young people and engagement with local communities.