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Media Release

For immediate release



New Water Safety Resource for Kohanga Reo

Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) in association with ACC and the National Kohanga Reo Trust are pleased to announce the release of a significant and comprehensive water safety resource for early childhood education.

‘Te Takaro Haumarū i te Wai’ (safer play near water) was launched last week in Wellington at the National Kohanga Reo Trust. The event was supported by kaumatua from Tainui who accompanied WSNZ and guests to the launch. The resource has been developed over the last two years, with the assistance of Kohanga Reo teachers and kaumatua from the Waikato region.

The purpose of Te Takaro Haumarū i te Wai is to teach;

- Concepts of water and water safety in the Maori language
- The necessity for adult supervision whenever children are in or near water
- Water safety activities and strategies for safer play near water

In 2003, WSNZ initiated the Maori Water Safety strategy in response to the rate of Maori drowning in New Zealand. The number of drowning fatalities for Maori children under the age of five years is alarming. 44% of the total drowning deaths of children under five were Maori (2001-2005). The most common factor in these drownings is a lack of adult supervision in and near water.

A review of educational resources written in te reo Maori about water safety revealed limited and dated material.

Mark Haimona, Maori Water Safety Project Manager comments “This resource will help to facilitate safer play and better supervision of our tamariki & mokopuna near water. WSNZ has worked in partnership with the Kohanga Reo Trust to meet the water safety education needs from Kohanga to Kura Kaupapa levels.”

Checklists and take home material for parents and whanau about active supervision and safety near water are also included in the kits.

Haimona continues “we are very fortunate to have had a wide range of sources and experts contribute to this taonga, all of whom specialise in education and water safety for Maori.

Bill Kaua of the National Kohanga Reo Trust says “this education kit will go a long way to meeting the health and safety needs of our tamariki and their whanau. By partnering with WSNZ we have recognized a need and are confident that Kohanga Reo around New Zealand will have a major role to play alongside whanau in breaking the drowning cycle for Maori. The development process was extensive and thoroughly positive, ensuring that the best interests of all involved were met.”

The National Kohanga Reo Trust will distribute ‘Te Takaro Haumarua i te Wai’ to all Kohanga Reo throughout New Zealand. The resource kit contains a picture book about a whanau playing near water, a teacher guide to water safety activities and strategies, along with posters, waiata (songs) and a take home checklist for parents, caregivers and whanau.

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