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**Media Release**  
For immediate release



## **CAMPAIGN TARGETS HIGH MAORI DROWNING RATES**

Water Safety New Zealand – in conjunction with sponsor New Zealand Post – is launching a campaign aimed squarely at improving the water safety skills of Maori.

The campaign - Kia Maanu, Kia Ora! [also called Stay Afloat Stay Alive] - is in response to the consistent over representation of Maori in New Zealand's drowning statistics. Around 15% of New Zealanders identify themselves as of Maori origin – but the proportion of drowning deaths involving Maori is consistently higher – at 20% or more.

Cory Sweeney, Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) Project Manager, states that much like the overall drowning toll, many of the drowning and water related injuries among Maori are preventable. Areas where Maori are most at risk in the water are when they're participating in activities such as diving for kaimoana, boating, fishing and swimming. Men aged 15-44 are the most vulnerable.

The Kia Maanu, Kia Ora! campaign has a central focus on youth and providing Maori with the skills to educate Whanau and Iwi members on staying safe while enjoying their traditional and cultural links with the water.

New Zealand Post's head of sponsorship, Nicola Airey, says the short-term goal is to have a positive effect on the Maori drowning toll.

"The real returns will come in future years with the delivery of Maori specific programmes," Airey says. "In time we will have developed highly trained Maori educators, who can deliver essential water safety programmes as they visit Maori communities".

"Every drowning death is a tragedy, but when you see a particular group of people dying at a disproportionately high rate it really is time to try to make a change. Drowning takes a



horrific toll on Maori lives, and we're committed to helping to save as many of those lives as we can".

The campaign launches this month with a number of events taking place around the North Island.

- From 13-17 January 75 Maori youth, aged from 7-16 years, will be engaged in a 5 day leadership wananga including a water safety programme in Central Hawkes Bay.
- Ten Maori candidates will undertake AUSTSWIM™ professional development in the area of teaching swimming and water safety on the 18 and 19 January. This will increase the number of Te Reo speaking learn to swim instructors who will be able to deliver to Kura and the Maori community in Auckland. The cost of these courses is being subsidised by New Zealand Post and will contribute to a sustainable Maori water safety programme in the Auckland region.
- The New Zealand Post Waka Ama Sprint nationals from 17-21 January at Lake Karapiro will draw in excess of 2,500 participants and an equal number of supporters to the Waikato. WSNZ - with the Waka Ama Federation and New Zealand Post - will host a range of water safety workshops throughout the event to raise awareness and educate participants on how they can safely enjoy the water.

Cory Sweeney says these events will provide a platform for reaching, influencing and educating Maori.

"They are a key component of the New Zealand Post Maori Water Safety Campaign and will be supported with promotions, resources and communications all working to ensure future generations of Maori are equipped with the skills to Stay Afloat and Stay Alive," he says.

Ends...

#### **Note to Editors:**

Media are invited to attend any of the listed events.

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