



# LIVE HERE GIVE HERE



HAWKE'S BAY  
FOUNDATION

Spring 2025



## A message from Alesha

As we step into Spring, I'm reminded of the resilience and generosity that continues to grow within our community. Over the last few months, we've had the privilege of celebrating the remarkable impact made possible by our donors and local charities.

In this newsletter we're proud to share the story of Awhi – a place where toast, Milo, and kindness form the foundation for real change. Awhi's work with rangatahi and tamariki who have slipped through the cracks of mainstream education is nothing short of transformative. Their simple, caring approach – starting with belonging – shows the power of community-funded initiatives to change futures.

Thanks to your generosity, Hawke's Bay Foundation has distributed a record amount of funding this year, supporting incredible organisations like Awhi. We've also seen more new donor funds established than ever before, reflecting the growing belief that together, we can make lasting change for generations to come.

In October, we celebrated this collective impact by bringing donors and charities together – a reminder of what's possible when generous locals and dedicated community organisations connect. To everyone who continues to give, to volunteer, or to lead grassroot initiatives – thank you. Your generosity is the thread that ties this community together.

**Alesha Hope, Executive Officer**

## It starts with toast and Milo

Every weekday morning at Awhi Charitable Trust begins the same way: toast and Milo. Ākongā settle into a comfortable room, full of sofas, games, pens and pencils, photos and cosy throws to wrap over their knees.

Awhi, based in Hastings has been running since 2021, set up by co-founders who identified a need for more options suited to rangatahi falling through the cracks of mainstream education.

What does “falling through the cracks” even mean?

Well, it's truancy – some of the kids at Awhi have never attended school with any regularity. They're disengaged, uninspired, and their needs totally unmet by the current education system. “And it's usually through no fault of their own,” begins co-founder/Operations Manager Vicki Welsby. “These are kids coping with a combination of factors that might include trauma, poverty, neurodivergence, transience, and an inflexible education model. We tell our whānau this all the time – you haven't failed the system. The education system has failed you.”

Coming from backgrounds in community education, Vicki and her co-founder and friend Ben Brodie started Awhi Charitable Trust in 2021 with an initiative for 13-16 year olds who would come via Alternative Education, an

output of the Ministry of Education. The senior programme is now supported by a junior programme: a small, completely community-funded programme for 9 to 12-year-olds. Limited to just 10 children, Vicki says much of what's learnt is around the concept of belonging.

“We're not teachers, but we know how to create a safe, welcoming environment. We start with relationships. If the child feels safe, then learning can happen.”



And it's really about the basics, to begin with.

Awhi gives its juniors structure and routine. The kids understand that they'll be collected each morning from home by van and brought to the Awhi space in central Hastings. After toast and Milo, it's a chat about the day, morning mahi, maybe a game of table tennis or basketball, lunch, and then piling into the three Awhi vans to get outside – perhaps to the river, the beach, or the Sports Park – and burn off some energy. “These are those fundamental building blocks of education that don't even include formalised reading and writing,” explains Vicki. “We teach lessons that centre around being with each other, following an instruction, getting along with our peers.”

“It's really beautiful to see our successes because often, these are children living





← tough lives. For them, at a regular school, it's easier to be angry than it is to describe what they are struggling with. And now, they're at the park with a stick playing sword fights or kicking a soccer ball, being children."

Today, Awhi has an Alternative Education contract for the senior programme (13 to 16-year-olds), many of whom then transition into vocational training or employment.

But the trust is 100% reliant on community funding to operate the junior programme. Grants from the likes of Hawke's Bay Foundation are essential.

The Foundation has supported Awhi's programmes for three years – that's three years of local children having somewhere to go, to fit in, and to learn.

"If that funding stopped, we'd be back to square one. And for some of these kids, that means sitting at home, excluded from school, and isolated. In Aotearoa, we just don't have options for our very young children. We simply think that under-13s who are not at school don't exist when actually, it's our most in-demand cohort. Some haven't been in school for multiple years. And they're nine years old."

Awhi is low on rules and big on kindness. The only boundary? No violence and no bullying. "This is a safe space for everyone, and if we can't keep others safe, then that's when we'll question whether we're the right fit for a child."

Vicki – one of a team of six staff – knows the programme is working when she sees the impact on both the student, and the wider whānau.

It can be profound, she says. "Parents who've fought to get their child out the door now watch them happy to head off to the van, excited for the day. Caregivers get some respite. And you see a shift in the pattern of the whānau, because if there's been an older sibling who is just not going anywhere every day, that is a message to the younger siblings. Once you break that, the family can really change. They know 'We're a whānau that goes to school now.'"

There's so much more Awhi wants to do – a bigger property that includes outdoor space, more opportunities for their rangatahi, employment of a specialised educator, and additional programmes that would accommodate younger tamariki. It's community funding from generous funders, through the likes of Hawke's Bay Foundation, that will help make it happen.

"We're preparing for growth, because we're hearing of kids getting kicked out of school aged six or seven. Some are being excluded from kindergarten," says Vicki.

"These are kids who don't deserve less – they deserve to be accessing everything they need and want. They really are the most awesome kids and it's amazing to be in the position where we get to hang out with them every day."



*Community groups or charities can create a 'Community Fund', that will provide a reliable long-term fundraising vehicle to support their vision forever, making sure people can benefit from their services, visit the places they've built or enjoy the experiences they create for generations to come. It is free to set up and supporters can donate to their fund at any time. View all of Our Funds on the website.*

**Karamū High School Fund**  
Launched in 2021 with a gift of \$100,000 from a former student, the Karamū High School Fund quickly attracted an equivalent sized donation from a couple with ties to Karamū High School. Wishing to remain anonymous, the three donors envisaged the fund to be used to benefit students through new sporting equipment, improving school facilities, learning materials, team activities and scholarships.

The income gained from the Karamū High School Fund, ensures the school receives a guaranteed annual income that will grow over time, to support the school's community and its students, now and forever.

## Together, we're making a difference – \$437,000 distributed to local charities

There's good news for 78 charitable organisations across the region who have received vital support through Hawke's Bay Foundation's annual distributions round, including a number of first-time applicants. A total of \$437,221 is now making its way directly to the community, funding everything from anxiety support to social services to the arts.

The Foundation received a record 121 applications this year – up 16% on 2024 – and were able to fund almost two thirds of those submitting. Executive Officer Alesha Hope says while she's "incredibly proud" to support charities doing it tough, it's clear demand is growing. "The need is great," Alesha says, "and we absolutely hate having to turn down applications. It's without doubt the hardest part of the job. Even though we're able to distribute 20% more this year than we did last year, we're seeing a significant gap between need and funding available – an \$855,000 gap in fact, compared to the amount that was applied for this year. Every application represents a group working hard for our region and we really wish we could support them all."

Among the newcomers to receive funding this year is Building Futures, a pioneering programme based in Hastings and led by Brendan O'Sullivan. Set up three years ago, it provides

practical work and life skills training for vulnerable rangatahi aged 16 to 24, helping them secure employment in construction and allied industries.

"Building Futures is doing transformative work," says Alesha. "It's opening doors for young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks. We're thrilled to support them for the first time this year."

Also new to the Foundation's funding list is Adaptive Whakauru Tahī Charitable Trust, which provides tailored movement opportunities for people with disabilities. Its work improves mobility and strength, supports fall prevention, and encourages social connection.

Another exciting addition is the Environment, Conservation & Outdoor Education Trust, whose trapping programme and kiwi crèche have already nurtured over 300 chicks, and returned them to Kaweka Forest Park.

"These three new recipients are all very different," Alesha notes, "but they're all committed, innovative and truly inspiring. It is a pleasure to support their mahi."

In addition to the general funding round, Hawke's Bay Foundation also manages a number of funds that are aligned with



individual donor wishes, with a further \$117,000 available in 2025 to support specific projects or organisations.

"Hawke's Bay Foundation offers a flexible approach to giving," says Alesha. "Some donors choose to support the general pool, while others have areas they're particularly passionate about such as the environment, education, or health."

She says one of the most meaningful aspects of the Foundation's work is the long-term nature of the relationships it builds. Each new charity funded will be visited by Hawke's Bay Foundation's specialist Distribution Committee to ensure there is a deep understanding of that community's need. "It's important to us that we learn everything we can about those we support, so we can better direct our funds in future rounds," explains Alesha.

"For those feeling inspired to contribute" Alesha adds "Even a small donation can go towards something meaningful. You don't need to be wealthy to make a difference, it's lovely to see those with more moderate means wanting to invest in their own backyard."



## A morning of celebration and community

What a privilege to bring together our donors, grant recipients, community leaders and supporters for our annual Connecting to Impact breakfast in October.

Alesha Hope shared: "At the heart of our foundation's mission is a simple but powerful belief: that strong communities are built by people who care. And today, that belief is standing in this very room."

The morning was a beautiful reminder

of what's possible when generous donors and dedicated community organisations connect.

A huge thank you to our event sponsors Craigs Investment Partners (particularly Arron Perriam for making the trip up from Christchurch) and Hansen Property for the stunning Atrium at Tribune venue.

Here's to building a thriving Hawke's Bay – together, and forever.



*"At the heart of our foundation's mission is a simple but powerful belief: that strong communities are built by people who care. And today, that belief is standing in this very room."*

Image far left: Aaron Perriam (Craigs), Alesha Hope and Kevin Callinicos.



## A strategic response to a tough funding climate

Financial security is top of mind for most Kiwis this year, as the cost of living continues to bite. And the same can certainly be said for charities and community groups.

Increasingly under pressure as government contracts are renegotiated (or lost altogether), operational costs rise, grants are harder to find and donors tighten their belts, a number of local organisations are turning to Hawke's Bay Foundation to help them manage their income.

"When we meet with community organisations, we hear again and again that fundraising has never been more competitive," says Alesha Hope, Executive Officer, Hawke's Bay Foundation. "For some, Hawke's Bay Foundation has become a port in the storm, helping to create a stable,

ongoing income stream through a dedicated fund, rather than relying solely on annual grants or fundraising campaigns."

The turbulent funding landscape is just one reason that over the past year, a record 11 new funds have been created under the Hawke's Bay Foundation umbrella. Some of our region's best-known organisations have enjoyed the benefits of established community funds for many years – Nourished for Nil, and Te Mata Park Trust, for instance – and more recently, the Foundation has welcomed newcomers like Rural Support Trust, too.

Then there are the funds established to provide ongoing support and governance to private and family trusts. Alesha says the elevated public profile of Hawke's Bay Foundation is another

reason for the swing towards the model. "There's been a shift in mindset. We've had strong local media coverage and are active within the community we serve. We're seeing boards and trustees ask smarter questions about sustainability, and many are now seeing an endowment-style fund as a critical part of that strategy. And we've had many conversations with charities who understand that Hawke's Bay Foundation is well-positioned to help secure financial wellbeing and support that strategy."

Hawke's Bay Foundation's fund model preserves capital, carefully investing every dollar as part of the Foundation's total endowment. "Perhaps the community is beginning to really see the value in pooling resources for the greater good," Alesha notes.

It's not just community organisations driving growth – individual and family donors are increasingly choosing to establish named funds as part of their estate planning or in lieu of setting up a separate private trust. Sometimes these donor-led funds are tailored to support a special cause, or a geographic location. The Foundation provides the legal, investment and governance framework, removing the burden of administration.

All signs point to the view that Hawke's Bay Foundation has matured into a dependable strategic partner for philanthropy. "It's encouraging," says Alesha, "and it's also a huge privilege. We're talking to local trusts who are looking to sustain their important community work, but also individuals giving back through a named fund, and we're adapting to suit different needs.

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