



RESTORATIVE CITY WHANGANUI

He waipuketia aroha mo
nga tangata rawa kore



CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT

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Restorative City Whanganui Trust Chair's Annual Report for 2024-2025 Financial Year

Introduction

This past year has been one of change and growth, both personally and for the Trust. With the arrival of my baby, I stepped back for a time, and others stepped forward to carry responsibilities. I want to acknowledge and thank those who held the kaupapa in my absence. Their leadership ensured that our work not only continued but deepened.

Periods of transition test an organisation's foundations. They ask: what will endure when capacity is stretched, and what will falter? For Restorative City Whanganui Trust (RCWT), the year has shown that our kaupapa is strong. Even through challenge, we grew in resilience, broadened our reach, and strengthened our cultural and community connections.

As we reflect, we are reminded of this quote:

“Perhaps the greatest challenge for any social change organisation is to demonstrate that the scale of its vision and purpose can be matched by its real-world impact.”

This challenge guides us. RCWT is dedicated to fostering, promoting, and encouraging high-quality restorative justice, restorative practices, and restorative services. Our mission is to ensure these practices are not only relevant but deeply meaningful and equitable, with the potential to enhance the lives of individuals, whānau, organisations, and the wider Whanganui community. The following four pillars show how this mission has been lived out during the year.

Strategic Priority 1: Restorative Relationships, Justice, and Practices

This pillar speaks to the heart of who we are: building genuine connections and ensuring restorative approaches are lived in practice, not only in principle.

This year our kaupapa was strengthened by the gift of a new whakataukī, “He waipuketia aroha mō ngā tangata rawa kore”, offered by John Maihi. This taonga grounds our work in the whenua and reminds us that restorative practices are indigenous practices. We are honoured to have mana whenua and tangata whenua contractors leading within our Trust, ensuring our mahi is guided by values that are tika (done in the right way) and pono (truthful and sincere).

Their leadership keeps us mindful that restorative work cannot be separated from the impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. It also reminds us that this work takes time. Our coordinator, for example, continues to advocate strongly against the pressure of contract timeframes, affirming that restoring relationships often involves many whānau members and must be paced with care and integrity.

Over the year, the Trust has also strengthened relationships with justice, social services, community networks, and local government. These connections extend the reach of restorative practice and embed it more firmly in the life of our city. The facilitation of the inaugural Citizens' Assembly was a clear example of this pillar in action- creating space for diverse voices, enabling constructive dialogue, and demonstrating that community decision-making can be inclusive and balanced.

Through these partnerships and practices, our mission is made real: restorative approaches that are relevant, equitable, and meaningful for all.

Strategic Priority 2: Leadership

Leadership for RCWT means modelling our values, setting a clear direction, and creating conditions for restorative practice to grow across Whanganui.

Internally, we showed leadership by embedding our seven values into governance and decision-making. Policy reviews, maintaining Social Service Accreditation, and strengthening team capacity reflected our commitment to tika - doing things in the right way.

Our refreshed branding, anchored by the new whakataukī, was not simply a change of image but a declaration of identity. It signalled to our community who we are becoming and what we stand for. The whakataukī gives us language and imagery that connect our kaupapa to the whenua and to the people we serve. By carrying this outwardly, we made visible the aroha, tika, and pono that already shape our daily work. In this way, the refresh was less about design and more about alignment- ensuring that how we present ourselves to the world is consistent with the values and responsibilities we hold at our core.

Externally, the Citizens' Assembly showed how restorative leadership can shape civic life. By modelling whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and āhurutanga, the Trust created an environment of trust and respect where 39 citizens could engage meaningfully. Feedback confirmed that restorative approaches add real value to public processes and pointed to their potential for future decision-making.

We also contributed nationally and internationally, sharing learning with police, justice sector partners, and restorative networks. This reflected mana motuhake, enabling self-determination by showing that restorative practice offers communities a different, empowering way forward.

In all of this, RCWT's leadership has been about living our mission, not by advocating from a distance, but by embodying values in our relationships, policies, and the way we serve our city.

Strategic Priority 3: Sustainability

Sustainability for RCWT is not only about financial survival but also about ensuring restorative practice remains accessible, inclusive, and relevant for the long term.

This year, despite the challenge of losing contractors, we maintained our Ministry of Justice contract and achieved all restorative justice targets. This outcome showed both the dedication of our team and the resilience of our systems. It strengthened our reputation as a trusted provider in the justice sector.

Financially, we ended the year in a stable position, with a much smaller deficit than projected. Careful stewardship, successful external funding applications, and disciplined spending all contributed. Sustainability in governance terms has meant developing resilience while also seeking diverse income streams.

Our Restorative Practice arm is now playing a larger role in sustainability. Work such as the Citizens' Assembly facilitation, workshops, and training have broadened our reach and created

new avenues of income. This demonstrates that restorative practice has value across civic, community, and organisational life, not just in the justice sector.

At the same time, equity remains central. We continue to amplify victims' voices, support offenders, and involve whānau so that restorative processes remain balanced and inclusive. This is sustainability at its deepest level, ensuring the kaupapa retains integrity and meaning for those most affected by harm.

Strategic Priority 4: Strength

Strength for RCWT means resilience, adaptability, and the ability to serve our community well, even in challenging times.

The most significant step this year was appointing a dedicated Manager, which has provided direction and stability. This leadership has allowed the Trust to focus more strategically, strengthen internal systems, and build external relationships.

The commitment of staff and contractors has been another source of strength. Following the loss of restorative justice contractors late last year, we found ourselves unprepared, without forward planning in place for such a major gap. Survival during this period came down to the dedication of our Manager and our Coordinator, who carried heavy workloads, thought on their feet, and adapted quickly. The Coordinator shouldered a massive case load while also mentoring new facilitators, while the Manager worked to recruit and stabilise a new pool of contractors. Without their commitment, the Trust would not have made it through.

Behind the scenes, our Admin Manager has provided vital expertise to keep systems running smoothly. Investments in Asana and Bright HR have modernised our operations, while a new staff member, even in a reduced-hours capacity, has eased pressure and spread capacity more evenly. We also completed a website and branding refresh, aligning our external presence with our vision. Our connections with the Court grew stronger, reinforcing restorative justice as a credible and valued process. At governance level, strength was further built with the appointment of new Board members, both bringing lived knowledge and skills that enrich the Board.

Completing our first financial audit and holding a strategic planning session were further markers of maturity and accountability. And underpinning all of this has been the deepening of relationships with iwi, shown most clearly in the gift of our whakataukī. These connections ground our strength in reciprocity and respect.

Together, these developments show that RCWT has the people, systems, and relationships to adapt, to grow, and to carry this kaupapa with integrity into the future.

Looking Ahead

Guided by our Strategic Vision, the Board has identified the following priorities for the year ahead. Each connects directly to the pillars that have shaped our growth:

- **Financial Sustainability & Governance** – Building on Strength, we will continue to strengthen financial systems, update key policies, clarify delegations, and ensure audit readiness. We will also diversify income streams to safeguard our future.

- **Restorative Practice Growth** – Linked to Restorative Relationships, Justice, and Practices, we will refine pricing models, deliver Restorative Justice Week events, and share our impact through storytelling that combines lived experience with data.
- **Data and Impact** – Continuing our focus on Leadership, we will improve the way we capture and report on outcomes, ensuring we gather both stories and statistics to demonstrate our impact and secure future support.
- **Community Engagement** – Connected to Relationships and Sustainability, we will deepen partnerships with iwi, civic and community leaders and mark our 25th birthday as a celebration of restorative approaches in Whanganui.
- **Governance Development** – Aligned with Strength, we will strengthen and diversify our Board, clarify roles, and prepare for changes under the Charities Act.

Conclusion

The past year has tested RCWT in ways we had not anticipated, but it has also shown what truly sustains us: the commitment of our people. Without the adaptability and dedication of our staff - especially our Manager and our Coordinator - we would not have made it through the loss of contractors and the challenges that followed. Their leadership, supported by the wider team and Board, gave the Trust the resilience it needed.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear. The challenge before us is to ensure that the scale of our vision for a Restorative City is always matched by real-world impact. With stronger systems, deeper relationships, and a renewed sense of purpose, RCWT is well positioned to continue making a meaningful contribution to Whanganui.