

# GROUNDED & RISING

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 / 2025



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# OUR MISSION

*We are committed to empowering and supporting Pacific peoples in transformational ways toward healthy, resilient and prosperous futures.*

# A WORD FROM OUR CEO



Talofa lava, Fakalofa lahi atu, Kia orana, Ni sa bula vinaka, Malo e lelei, and warm Pacific greetings.

Grounded in Pacific values and community trust, Mapu Maia continues to deliver integrated, culturally responsive services across Aotearoa New Zealand. With a strong national presence and a dedicated focus on Pacific communities in Tāmaki Makaurau, Waikato, Wellington, and Canterbury, our work spans mental health and addictions support, family wellbeing, youth development, gambling harm prevention, and community education. Through deep connections with Pacific churches, community groups, and service providers, we ensure that engagement is truly by Pacific, for Pacific.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Mapu Maia has experienced significant growth, marked by both achievements and challenges. I am proud of the tremendous progress we have made together.

One of the most exciting developments this year was the introduction of peer-led services and peer support roles. What began as a single Pasifika Rainbow peer support role has expanded to include positions in Gambling Harm - Lived Experience, Gambling Harm Clinical, and Access and Choice services. These roles strengthen our commitment to lived experience and community-led solutions.

We have also invested heavily in infrastructure and operational improvements, enhancing our Human Resources functions, reinforcing Health, Safety and Wellbeing approaches, and strengthening our Quality Management Systems. These efforts reflect our dedication to continuous improvement and service excellence.

Another milestone was the implementation of Salesforce as our Integrated Client Management System, enabling stronger data control, improved analysis, and better evaluation of services. Looking ahead, we plan to expand Salesforce capabilities to further streamline processes, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency across all offices.

Workforce development remains a priority, with staff benefiting from regular internal and external training programmes that build skills, foster leadership, and boost confidence among both frontline and management teams.

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Pacific communities, stakeholders, and partners who make our work possible. At the heart of Mapu Maia are our clients, their families, and the communities

*At the heart of Mapu Maia are our clients, their families, and the communities we walk alongside every day.*

- Tuala Pesio Ah-Honi

We were encouraged by the expansion of Access and Choice contracts in Auckland and the successful rollout of Pacific Outreach - Together We Thrive events in Hawke's Bay, a testament to our strong partnerships with regional church leaders and their congregations. In the South Island, the opening of our Christchurch office by Hon. Minister Matt Doocey was a significant milestone, ensuring Pacific communities have greater access to culturally tailored services.

Looking to the future, we are excited about several developments, including the opening of a North Shore office to meet the growing needs of Pacific communities across the motu. As Pacific populations increase, so does the demand for services that reflect our values and aspirations.

we walk alongside every day. Our focus remains on creating meaningful impact and achieving positive, healthy outcomes. Every door is the right door to access help services designed with Pacific, for Pacific, and by Pacific.

We look forward to the year ahead as we continue to serve and strengthen our Pasifika communities.

**Tuala Pesio Ah-Honi**  
Mapu Maia Limited CEO

# A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

Ni sa bulu vinaka, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Fakalofa lahi atu, and warm Pacific greetings.

The past year has tested the resilience of our Pacific communities like never before. Financial hardship, rising social needs, mental distress, addiction challenges, and the ongoing impacts of gambling harm have placed immense strain on families across Aotearoa. These realities remind us why our mission is so critical, and why our work must continue with unwavering commitment.

Despite these challenges, Mapu Maia has stood firm in its values and collective responsibility. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that culturally grounded care, advocacy, and support reach

those who need it most. Guided by Pacific principles and holistic approaches, we have continued to walk alongside our communities with compassion and strength.

This year marks a defining milestone in our journey: Mapu Maia has become a fully-fledged Pacific provider. This achievement reflects years of strategic cultural leadership and a shared belief in designing services that are not only effective but deeply rooted in Pacific values and strengths-based approaches. It is a testament to what can be achieved when vision, culture, and community come together.

Our progress has been significant. We have reviewed and developed a new constitution to ensure it reflects Pacific values,

supports growth, and strengthens governance. We have invested in IT systems to enhance data integrity, sovereignty, reporting, and operational efficiency as we scale. And we have deepened engagement with stakeholders, Pacific community leaders, churches, government agencies, and commissioning teams, all in our commitment to uplift Pacific wellbeing.

On behalf of the Mapu Maia Board, I extend heartfelt gratitude to our Chief Executive, Tuala Pesio Ah-Honi, for her exemplary leadership during this milestone year. Her unwavering commitment to Pacific wellbeing, guided by strategic clarity and cultural integrity, has been instrumental in shaping our identity as a Pacific provider. We also acknowledge our senior management and leadership team for their dedication and alignment with Pacific values. To all our staff, thank you for your cultural leadership, compassion, and service. Your work in supporting families facing immense economic challenges is invaluable.

*Mapu Maia has remained steadfast in ensuring support and culturally grounded care where it is most needed.*

- Maikali Kilioni

As we look ahead, we do so with optimism and determination. The Board remains confident in our collective effort to strengthen Pacific wellbeing across Aotearoa. Together, we will continue to innovate, collaborate, and champion resilience within our communities.

Vinaka Vakalevu

**Maikali Kilioni**  
Chair Mapu Maia Limited



# MEET OUR BOARD



## Maikali Kiloni

Maikali Kiloni, born and raised in Fiji, has over two decades of experience in the addiction sector. He is a founding member of DRUA, the Pacific Addiction Network in Aotearoa, and currently serves on its executive committee. He has previously been a board member of the Drug and Alcohol Practitioners' Association Aotearoa-New Zealand (DAPAANZ) and has held key roles across multiple sectors, including the Workforce Development Council, Forensic Mental Health Service, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care, Health Services Auditing, and the Ministry of Justice. A dedicated volunteer, Maikali has long been active in Wellington's Fijian community, bringing his sector expertise and cultural knowledge to support Pacific wellbeing across Aotearoa.

## Anne Fitisemanu

Anne Fitisemanu, of Niuean and Samoan descent, is a leader with extensive experience across education, health, corporate, and not-for-profit sectors. Driven by her Pacific heritage and personal experience with economic hardship, she is committed to creating opportunities and promoting equity for people of diverse ethnicity, gender, and ability. Anne is known for breaking down barriers, inspiring others, and demonstrating that anything is possible through focus, commitment, and self-belief. She previously served as CEO of TupuToa, advancing equity by creating pathways for Māori and Pacific people in corporate Aotearoa, and is now CEO of Make-A-Wish Foundation NZ, continuing her work to serve all communities. Anne also contributes as a board member for several not-for-profits, including Awhina Plunket, where she was the first Pacific Peoples appointment, and is a member of the Institute of Directors. She is widely recognised for fostering innovation, building diverse teams, and forging partnerships that create lasting impact.

## Edna 'Ungatea Tu'itupou Havea

Edna 'Ungatea Tu'itupou Havea, born and raised in Tonga, is Programme Director for Pasifika Pathways at Victoria University of Wellington and is currently completing a PhD in Social Policy, with research focused on Tongan experiences of hospital complaints in Aotearoa New Zealand. Born and raised in Tonga, she brings deep cultural insight and a strong commitment to advancing equity and inclusion across health, education, and community sectors. She played a pivotal role in establishing New Zealand's first Pacific undergraduate nursing programme at Whitireia, a milestone initiative that has strengthened pathways for Pacific peoples in the health workforce. Her leadership in nursing education has been formally recognised by the New Zealand Nurses Organisation. Edna's governance contribution is underpinned by her extensive experience in programme development, policy research, and advocacy for Pacific communities, ensuring that diverse voices are represented and valued in decision-making.

## Meleane Burgess

Meleane Burgess was born in Samoa and moved to New Zealand to finish high school before studying at the University of Waikato. She is a Chartered Member of the Institute of Directors and an Associate of the Chartered Governance Institute New Zealand. Meleane is Managing Director of Dynamic Advisory Ltd, an Independent Director on the Public Trust Board, a Council member at the University of Waikato, and a Trustee of Mahi Mihinare - Anglican Action. She has been recognised with the 2022 Pacific Governance Leader and Rising Governance Star awards, as well as Pacific Woman in Business at the 2023 Waikato Pacific Business Excellence Awards, and was part of the 2024 Global Women Breakthrough Leadership Programme. A former member of the Ministry of Social Development Pacific Reference Group, she continues to advocate for Pacific communities. Outside work, she enjoys time with her husband and three children and tending her garden.

## Moefainu Daisy Lavea-Timo

Daisy Lavea-Timo has two decades of experience teaching, mentoring, and weaving connections across multiple spheres. A former English and drama teacher, Southern Regional Manager for the Ministry of Youth Development, and Engagement Advisor for Regenerate Christchurch, Daisy is passionate about connecting talanoa across sectors, particularly youth-focused initiatives. In 2020, she founded Cross-Polynate, bringing together a dynamic team to improve outcomes for communities across Aotearoa and Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa. A proud wife and mum, Daisy holds multiple degrees from the University of Canterbury, dabbles in Rugby League, and was crowned the 2017 New Zealand Slam Poetry Champion.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

- Main National Office
- Regional Support Hub

## Public Health

Community Outreach & Engagement

**5692**

People Engaged

**4041**

People Supported

3%

17%

10%

66%

4%

62%

Pasifika

20%

Māori

12%

European

6%

Asian

## Clinical

Demographic Breakdown

**5152**

Group Interventions

**1715**

Individual Clients

11%

17%

56%

13%

2%

65%

Pasifika

27%

Māori

5%

European

3% Other

**1518**

Brief Interventions

**1385**

Non-Gambling Referrals

**1123**

Facilitations

## Clinical

The data shows the extensive clinical outputs of the Mapu Maia clinical team over the past 12 months. The outputs for 2024/25 have increased by +25% from the previous period, which demonstrates the growth of clinical services across the regions.

Total Clinical Full Interventions 2024 - 2025.

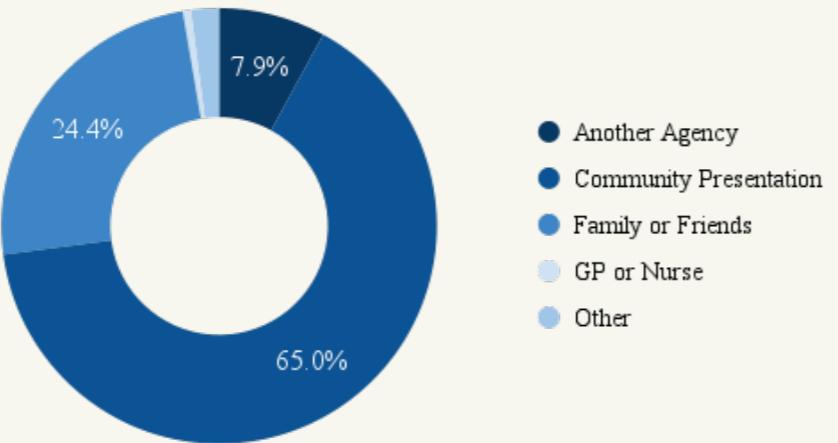
Our National Clinical Team have managed to exceed expectations reaching over 10k Full interventions within the period.

**10327**

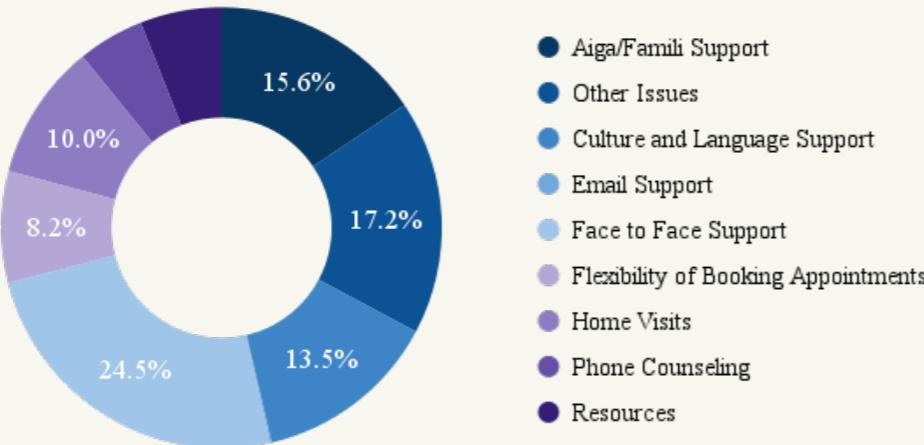
Total

# FEEDBACK

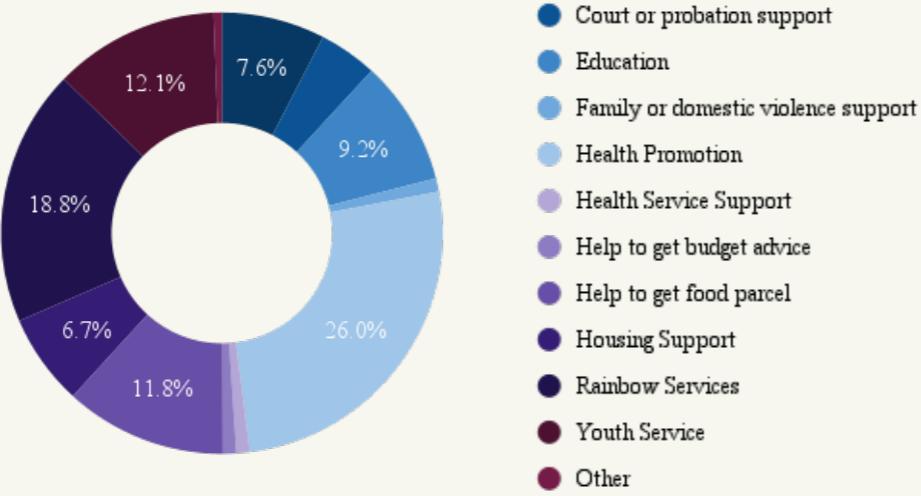
## Introduced to Mapu Maia



## Support Most Valued



## Other Support Accessed



*"Highlight connecting with other regions and strengthening the bond with our current region's management."*

**- 99%**

*of clients strongly agreed/ agreed "Session was helpful & informative"*

**- 98%**

*of clients strongly agreed/ agreed "Presenter was engaging"*

**- 97%**

*of clients strongly agreed/ agreed "Increased my understanding"*

**- 99%**

*of clients extremely likely/ likely "Recommend us"*



# OUR PROGRAMMES

*"Our Mapu Maia values are not just written on paper - we live and breathe them. We bring the alofa from our homes into work, then take that love out into the community."*

– Lisa ah Honi-Uini, Mapu Maia National Ta'iala Manager



# Ola Ponapona

*A Woven Basket of Hope.*

A six-week project led by Mapu Maia health promoters to support Pacific elders in understanding gambling-related harm. The programme focused on how gambling can affect relationships, mental wellbeing, and contribute to psychological abuse. Over the course of the project, elders engaged in culturally meaningful discussions, learning to recognise the impacts of gambling and explore healthier coping strategies.

The project concluded with a community celebration where participants shared songs and poetry that highlighted gambling awareness, creating a space for connection, reflection, and collective support. By weaving culture, creativity, and education together, Ola Ponapona empowered Pacific elders with knowledge and reinforced the importance of family and community wellbeing.

*"Ola Pona Pona supports participants to strengthen their wellbeing through culturally grounded practices."*

*– Programme Facilitator*



## Outcomes

- » Participants were engaged and reflected openly on stress, wellbeing, and cultural connection.
- » Many shared challenges with managing mental health and family responsibilities.
- » Participants demonstrated increased self-awareness and explored practical coping strategies.
- » Some were applying the tools learned, while others were still learning to integrate them.
- » Overall, participants were motivated and looking forward to ongoing sessions.

# Weave your Worth

## Lalagaina o lou Tagata

Weave Your Worth celebrated mothers of all ages, creating a space for connection, wellbeing, and awareness of gambling-related harm within Pacific communities. The initiative honoured the vital role mothers play in families and the wider community, offering culturally meaningful ways to strengthen bonds, share stories, and develop skills. In partnership with the Falealaga women's collective, the project brought Pacific women together through weaving, storytelling, and other creative activities. These sessions offered a positive and enriching alternative to gambling, fostering connection through culture, music, and shared experiences. The programme also delivered

important messages about gambling-related harm, using poetry, songs in Pacific languages, and interactive conversations to ensure the learning was culturally resonant and impactful. The Mother's Day event was a highlight, welcoming around 250 mothers into a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere. A standout moment was the Mother's Day Disco Dance, recognising and celebrating the invaluable contributions of mothers in their families and communities. The event featured 15 health and social service providers, including Mapu Maia, Local Doctors, Fonua Ola, Stoke Aotearoa NZ, Penina Health Trust, Bowel and Cervical Screening, Heart Foundation, Diabetes Aotearoa,

AWHI National Hauora, The Totara Hospice, The Fono, Smokefree Service, Hato Hone St John, Ma Te Huruhuru, and Vaiola Pacific Island Budgeting Service -providing advice, wellness checks, and support to attendees. Through Weave Your Worth, Mapu Maia created a space that celebrated mothers, nurtured community connections, and promoted wellbeing. The initiative highlighted how cultural engagement and creative practices can inspire stronger connections, raise awareness, and support healthier choices - helping Pacific communities thrive together.



# My Upu: Christchurch Womens Group

## Talanoa & Kōrero: Healing Through Creative Writing

In March 2025, Mapu Maia supported the establishment of a Talanoa and Kōrero group for Eastern Eagles Whānau Leaders and the wider Eastern community, led by Lupe Asi. The group was designed to provide a supportive environment where whānau could come together to share their experiences, reflect, and connect through storytelling.

The program ran over eight weeks and focused on creative writing as a tool for self-awareness, cultural connection, and healing. Each week, participants engaged with prompts inspired by songs, stories, and cultural traditions, encouraging them to explore their emotions, reflect on their experiences, and express

themselves in a safe and guided space.

A key focus of the program was addressing the impacts of challenges such as gambling harm, addiction, anger, and family violence. By providing opportunities to talk openly, write, and reflect, participants were able to build coping strategies, strengthen resilience, and reconnect with their identity

and cultural heritage. Through Talanoa and Kōrero, participants not only found a safe space for personal expression, but also strengthened their relationships within the community. The program fostered a sense of belonging, supported healing, and encouraged meaningful steps towards growth and wellbeing for individuals and whānau alike.

*"Through Talanoa and Kōrero, participants not only found a safe space for personal expression, but also strengthened their relationships within the community."*

– Lupe Asi Regional Clinical Practice Lead Christchurch



# Tina Alofa: A Mother's Love

Tinā Alofa celebrated and uplifted Pasifika mothers in Hawke's Bay through connection, culture, and creativity. This free wellbeing event provided mothers with a space to relax, reconnect, and be honoured, offering culturally enriching activities that strengthened community and sisterhood. Tina Alofa is a mix of wellbeing sessions, creative workshops, and cultural performances. The community enjoyed sei-making workshops, a vibrant Siva Samoa session, a Tongan performance by Sisifolau Vaitaiki, and heartfelt talanoa on parenting and mental health. Through these activities, mothers were supported to reflect, rejuvenate, and feel spiritually and emotionally refreshed.

Community collaboration was central to the event's success. Providers including Te Whatu Ora Cervical Screening Team, Cancer Society NZ, and Stroke Foundation NZ offered guidance, care, and support, ensuring participants had access to practical health and wellbeing resources alongside cultural celebration. With music, kai, and shared

stories, Tinā Alofa created a joyful, safe, and empowering space where mothers could be recognised for their strength, love, and vital role in family and community life. The event strengthened bonds among Pasifika women, celebrated their cultural heritage, and reinforced wellbeing practices in a fun and meaningful way.

*"The first time in years I've felt like myself again."*

– A Tina Alofa Mother



# Together we Thrive Auckland

**Pacific Outreach:** Together We Thrive Mapu Maia's Together We Thrive initiative continues to bring Pacific communities together, fostering connection, culture, and access to vital health and wellbeing services. Our approach is family-centred, culturally grounded, and focused on reducing barriers, ensuring every individual can connect with care close to home.

From November 2024 through May 2025, we hosted multiple community engagement events, reaching families, youth, and elders across South and North Auckland. These events combined fun, interactive activities with meaningful health promotion, including face painting, colouring competitions, Zumba, wellness checks, immunisations, and one-on-one support sessions.

*The event brought together a wide range of services to support our Pasifika whānau.*



## Outcomes

- » Engaged multiple churches, schools, and community groups to promote immunisations, health checks, and family wellbeing.
- » Delivered interactive activities, brief interventions, and wellness checks, reaching youth, elders, and families.
- » Completed 500+ interventions, conducted surveys, and generated referrals to health and social services.
- » Events strengthened intergenerational connections, and highlighted the community's desire for more Pacific-focused initiatives.

# Access & Choice

*North Shore Auckland & Hawke's Bay*

Our journey continued with courage, connection, and community. Across Hawke's Bay and Auckland, we strengthened relationships with Pasifika, Māori, youth, and Rainbow communities through events, outreach, and culturally safe programmes. Our Ta'iala, Clinical, and Rainbow Peer Support teams led initiatives such as Waitangi Community Day, Hawke's Bay Samoan Volleyball, Tina Alofa (wellbeing for mothers), Le Lumana'i Siva Academy (youth confidence and cultural identity), Ia Fai Ma Sulu Rainbow Camp, Polyfest 2025, and St Paul's Church engagement. These moments were not only about presence, but building trust, sharing knowledge, and connecting families and young people to the care they need.

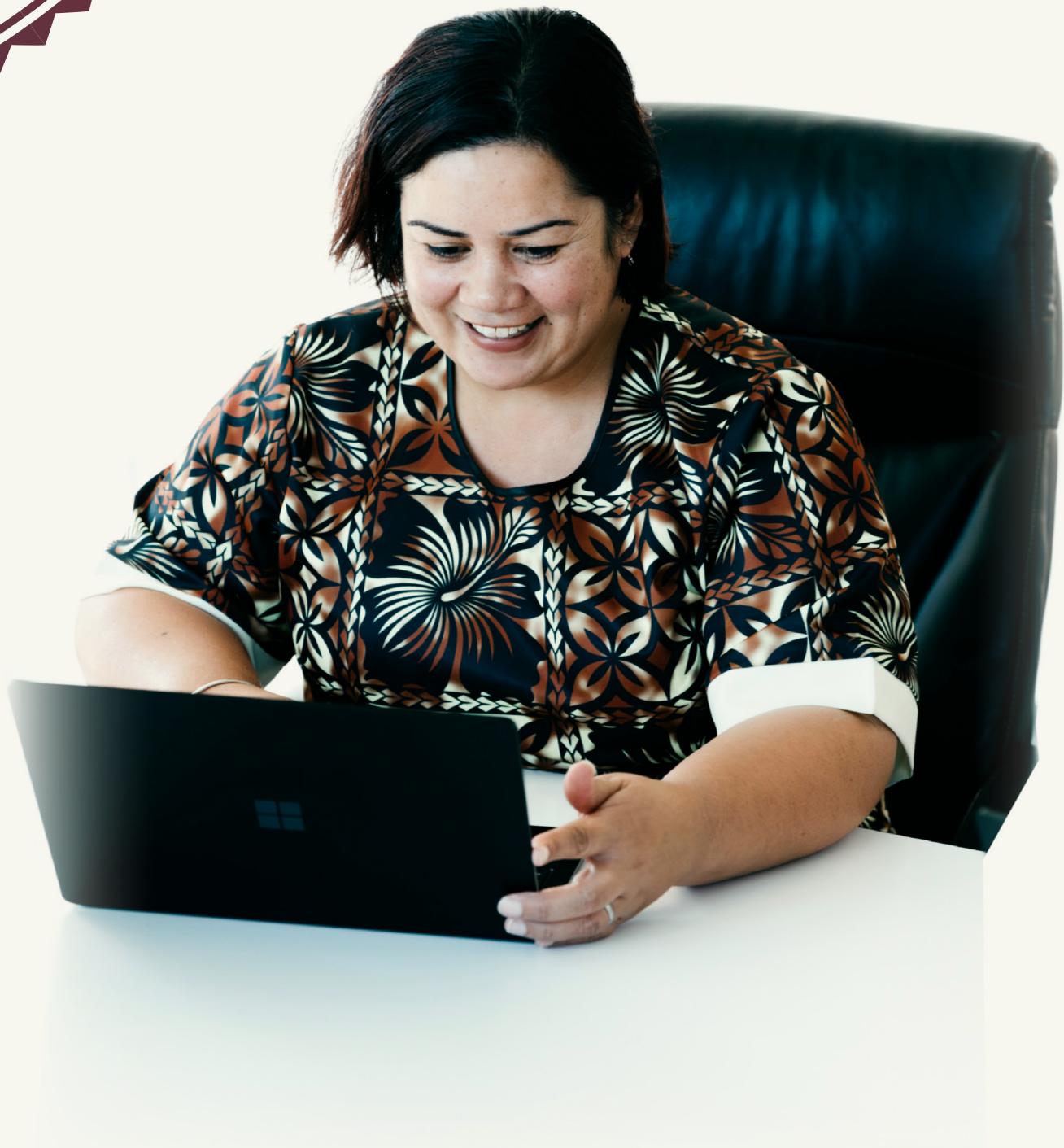
We welcomed a new Mental Health & Addictions Clinician to Hawke's Bay, strengthening our ability to support Pasifika communities. Our walk-in counselling sessions and presentations to RSE groups, schools, and local organisations created accessible pathways for wellbeing and mental health support. Guided by the Fonofale and Va Tagata frameworks, we continue

refining services, strengthening referral pathways, and collecting client feedback to ensure every programme nurtures cultural identity, resilience, and hope. Together, we are weaving stronger connections, fostering healthy, resilient, and prosperous futures for our communities, and honouring the journeys of those we serve.

*"I finally feel like I belong somewhere, without having to explain myself"*

*- Rainbow Camp Member*





# OUR GROWTH

Over the past year, Mapu Maia has grown in response to rising demand for culturally competent mental health and wellbeing services across Aotearoa. Pacific communities continue to seek spaces where they feel seen, safe, and supported, where culture and care come together.

With the Pacific population now exceeding **480,000** nationwide and more than **41,000** living in the South Island, the need for accessible, culturally grounded services has never been greater. In 2024-25, we expanded our reach through the opening of our Christchurch office, the growth of KOA programmes across **13** Auckland schools so far, and the strengthening of our Access and Choice services in Hawke's Bay and Auckland.

Each step reflects our commitment to ensuring Pacific families can access meaningful, culturally safe support wherever they are.

## Kia Ora Ake

### KOA: School Programmes

Mapu Maia's KOA programme has been building strong connections with tamariki, staff, and whanau across Auckland schools, delivering culturally grounded art therapy, sports, and wellbeing activities for primary school students, predominantly Pacific and Māori students. The focus is on fostering confidence, leadership, emotional regulation, respectful relationships, and cultural identity while supporting positive classroom behaviour and teamwork.

Since February 2025, the KOA team has delivered sessions at Manurewa East, Everglade, Sir Edmund Hillary, Manurewa Central, Reremoana, Green

Meadows Intermediate, Papatoetoe West, and Roscommon schools. Activities include physical education, arts and crafts, the new Boxing-Ed programme to build self-confidence and discipline, and Teine Toa for young females to encourage participation and self-expression. Through ongoing engagement with school leadership, SWIS, and whanau, the KOA team supports high-needs tamariki and coordinates with social services when needed. Celebratory activities, such as term-end kai and group events, have strengthened whanaungatanga, with staff noticing improved behaviour, teamwork, and confidence.

With 1-4 active groups per school, demand for KOA programmes continues to grow. Feedback from staff, tamariki, and whanau highlights increased engagement, confidence, and a sense of belonging. The team is refining session plans and developing a resource pack to support communication, leadership, emotional regulation, cultural identity, and confidence-building. KOA demonstrates Mapu Maia's commitment to empowering tamariki through culturally relevant, strengths-based programmes that foster wellbeing, resilience, and community connection.



## Opening of Christchurch Office

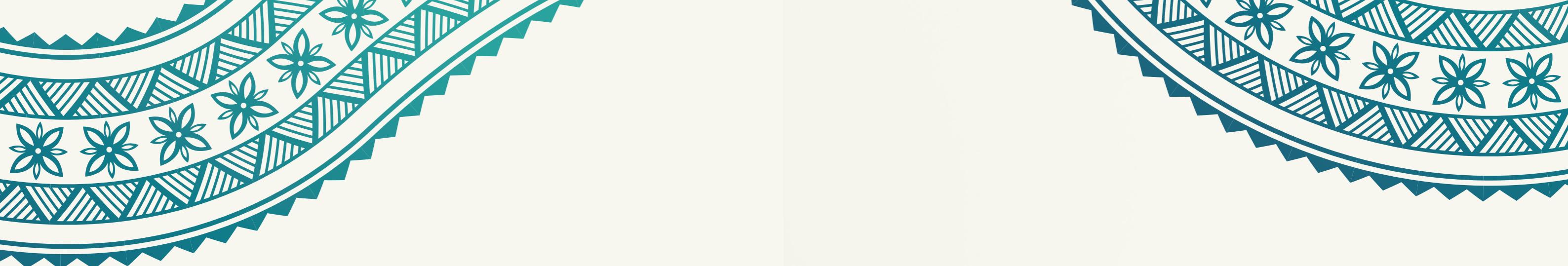
### Culturally Competent Mental Health Support

In late 2024, Mapu Maia opened a new Christchurch office to provide culturally grounded mental health services for the growing South Island Pacific community, now nearly 41,000 strong. The branch aims to remove barriers of language, stigma, and cultural misunderstanding, offering safe, welcoming spaces for support. The Christchurch office responds to high demand for culturally competent mental health care, supporting communities with accessible, relatable, and safe services. Mental Health Minister Matt Doocey highlighted the importance of local, culturally aware services in breaking down stigma and ensuring wellbeing for all.



*"Quite often there can be a barrier, potentially about language, cultural competency and services, so by working with services like Mapu Maia they know their community; they know them quite often personally."*

- Mental Health Minister Matt Doocey



# LIVED EXPERIENCE

Our uniquely Pacific approach means we walk alongside our tangata ola at every step. This year, our lived experience peer support team continues to be a vital part of that journey.

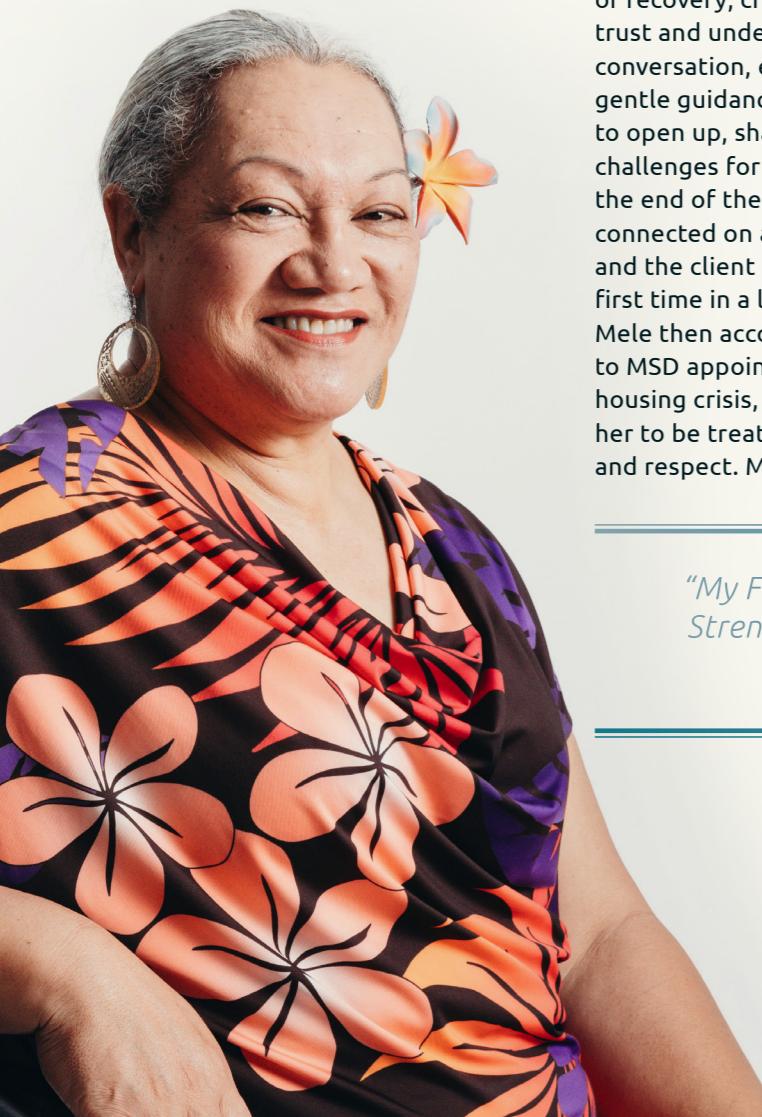
Working alongside our clinicians, these team members bring empathy, understanding, and insight from their own lived experiences. They support individuals and families to navigate challenges, make informed choices, and move toward wellness - without judgement and with deep cultural understanding.

Our peer support workers share their stories, highlighting resilience, hope, and the strength that comes from having someone who truly understands your journey.



# Mele

We are privileged to have Sauvao Mele Mary Siaosi Pese walking alongside Pacific families and individuals affected by gambling harm. Mele brings over 30 years of lived experience fighting a gambling addiction. She guides people with empathy, integrity, and practical support. Her journey has not been easy, but it has given her the insight to understand the challenges faced by those navigating recovery while maintaining family, cultural, and community responsibilities. Born in New Zealand to Samoan parents from Faleasiu, Utuali'i, Falefa, and Faleapuna, Mele carries her culture with pride and draws on it in every part of her work. Since joining Mapu Maia full-time in April 2025, she has led weekly peer support



groups for recovering gamblers, provided one-on-one mentoring, and represented Pacific voices in the National Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG). Through LEAG, she has shared her knowledge at Sky City Casino workshops, advising staff on how to engage empathetically with visitors experiencing gambling harm, self-exclusion processes, and recovery strategies. Mele's work is best seen through the people she supports. One powerful example is a 49-year-old Kiribati mother of seven, who came to Mapu Maia feeling ashamed, isolated, and overwhelmed by her gambling and the impact on her children. Meeting Mele for the first time at a recovering gamblers' support group, the client was hesitant to speak. Mele shared her own story of recovery, creating a space of trust and understanding. Through conversation, empathy, and gentle guidance, the client began to open up, sharing her fears and challenges for the first time. By the end of the session, they had connected on a personal level, and the client felt hope for the first time in a long while. Mele then accompanied the client to MSD appointments during a housing crisis, advocating for her to be treated with dignity and respect. Mele's presence

ensured that the client received empathetic support while securing temporary housing through Monte Cecilia Trust. Over the following weeks, the client continued attending peer support meetings, building confidence, stability, and trust in both the process and herself. Alongside her lived experience, Mele has also completed a Diploma in Health and Wellbeing (Social and Community Services) Level 4, specialising in Mental Health and Addiction Support, combining her practical knowledge with professional ethics, boundaries, and mental health literacy. She brings this balance of experience and expertise to every interaction, helping clients and their families navigate recovery in culturally grounded, safe, and practical ways.

At Mapu Maia, Mele exemplifies what it means to walk alongside people. She shows that recovery is possible, that cultural identity and Pacific values of alofa, fa'aaloalo, and community can guide support, and that individuals can rebuild confidence, wellbeing, and hope. Through her work, she strengthens families, reduces stigma, and empowers Pacific communities to rise above harm, one person at a time.

*"My Flesh and my Heart may fail but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion Forever"*  
Psalms 73:26

# Annie

We are grateful to walk alongside Muā'ava Annie Kaio as our Rainbow Peer Support Worker in Hawke's Bay. Born and raised in Samoa, Annie is a proud Fa'afafine, carrying her culture, values, and lived experience into every connection she makes. Through her work, she supports Rainbow Pasifika youth and community members to navigate challenges of identity, acceptance, and wellbeing - always with empathy, respect, and cultural understanding. Annie's journey of self-discovery began in childhood. While other boys played rugby and toy guns, she was drawn to dolls, singing, and dance. Growing up in Samoa, she saw Fa'afafine living visibly and proudly in her community, offering a guiding light in understanding who she was. High school brought challenges, including bullying, judgement, and isolation, leaving Annie feeling unseen and unsafe at times. A turning point came when she joined a cultural arts and performance group - a space where her talents and identity were celebrated. Over time, she shared her identity with her family and wider community, gradually building acceptance, understanding, and connection. Through this lived experience, Annie creates safe and inclusive spaces for Rainbow Pasifika youth, where they feel valued, seen, and understood in both their cultural and sexual identities. Her guidance fosters trust, encourages open conversations, and empowers young people to embrace who they are with confidence and pride.

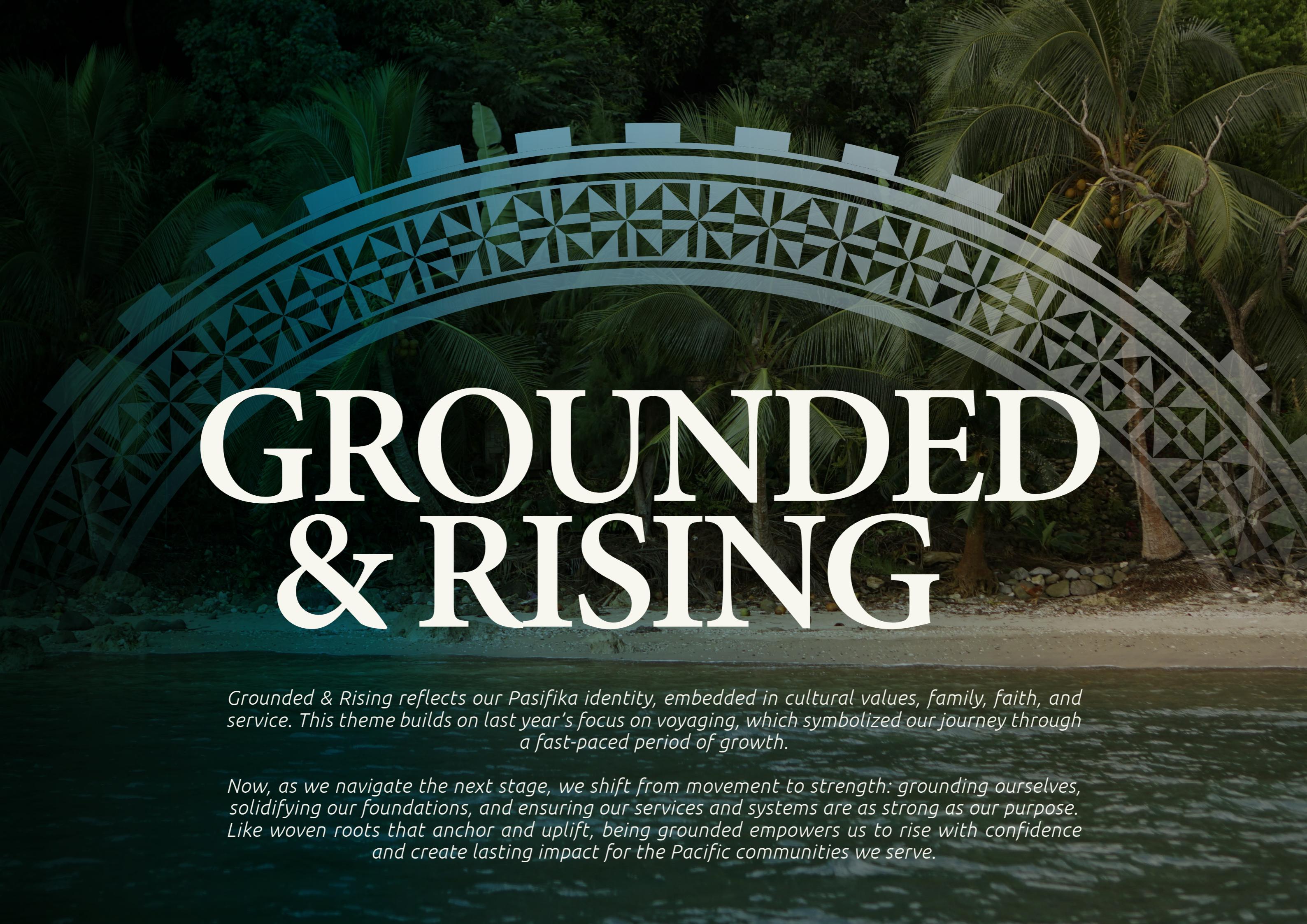
One shining example of Annie's impact is a 17-year-old of our Le Lumana'i Siva Academy. Who initially struggled with confidence, belonging, and



*"Be the voice you needed when you were younger."*

expressing their Rainbow identity, even within a supportive home. Through one-on-one peer support with Annie and participation in the Academy, they discovered a safe, culturally grounded space to explore identity, build confidence, and connect through dance and cultural performance. - "Le Lumana'i Siva Academy has given us rainbow youth a safe space to connect with our culture. Through dance, I've built confidence, pride, and a sense of belonging - showing me that our identities and traditions can stand together with strength." Annie's work goes far beyond individual support. She advocates for Rainbow Pasifika youth within families, schools, churches, and communities, helping to bridge cultural and generational gaps

and promote understanding. Through mentorship, advocacy, and education, she demonstrates how Pacific values such as alofa, fa'aaloalo, and community can exist in harmony with diverse sexualities and gender identities. At Mapu Maia, Annie embodies our approach of walking alongside people rather than leading from the front. She offers guidance, encouragement, and representation, creating inclusive spaces that foster resilience, confidence, and cultural pride. Through her work, Rainbow Pasifika communities are uplifted, wellbeing is strengthened, and young people can feel safe, respected, and celebrated - ready to navigate their own journeys with hope and courage.



# GROUNDED & RISING

*Grounded & Rising reflects our Pasifika identity, embedded in cultural values, family, faith, and service. This theme builds on last year's focus on voyaging, which symbolized our journey through a fast-paced period of growth.*

*Now, as we navigate the next stage, we shift from movement to strength: grounding ourselves, solidifying our foundations, and ensuring our services and systems are as strong as our purpose. Like woven roots that anchor and uplift, being grounded empowers us to rise with confidence and create lasting impact for the Pacific communities we serve.*

