

## MEDIA RELEASE

5 December 2017

### Celebrating Safe Sleep Day: Weaving for future generations

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Te Waka Hauora, Nelson Marlborough Health's Maori Health & Vulnerable Populations team will hold their first Nelson hapū wānanga this week, a new kaupapa Māori pregnancy, birth and parenting programme.

This new initiative also marks the celebration of Te Ra Mokopuna (National Safe Sleep Day) on 7 December, with local weavers supporting our communities throughout Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Maui (the top of the South Island) to promote wahakura (woven baby bed) and safe sleeping practices for tamariki mokopuna.

The two-day pregnancy and parenting forum is part of Nelson Marlborough Health's response to Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) Prevention. The key modifiable risk factors for SUDI prevention, such as stopping smoking in pregnancy, breastfeeding and using safe sleeping practices will feature in the hapū wānanga programme.

A wahakura weaving demonstration with kairaranga (weavers) Lyn Bird and Ala Ward will showcase the skills required to make these taonga (treasures). Wahakura embody the Māori concept of whakapapa as 'he taonga tuku iho' – a gift passed down from our ancestors. They are a symbol of matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), and a practical and safe place for pēpi (baby) to sleep.

Hapū wānanga is an interactive programme and draws on traditional Māori childbirth practices, pūrakau (stories) and karakia. Pregnant women and their wider whānau support are invited to attend.

On completion of the wānanga, all participants receive a wahakura and koha pack that includes baby essentials and gifts to welcome their new pēpi.

Safe Sleep Day is about encouraging communities and organisations to promote safe sleep practice in creative and fun ways. Further information about Safe Sleep Day is available on the SUDI National Coordination website: [www.SUDInationalcoordination.co.nz](http://www.SUDInationalcoordination.co.nz)

**Date & Time:** Friday 7 December 2018, Media invited to attend 10.30 – 11.30am

**Venue:** Nelson Suburbs Football Club, Saxton Fields, 142 Saxton Road East, Stoke, NELSON 7011

**Media are invited to speak with whānau, weavers, and guests.**

**Ditre Tamatea**, General Manager, Te Waka Hauora, Māori Health and Vulnerable Populations, Nelson Marlborough Health.

**Fay Selby-Law**, General Manager, National SUDI Prevention Coordination Service, Hāpai Te Hauora Māori Public Health

**Felicty Spencer**, Kaiwhakahaere Kaupapa/Portfolio Manager, Te Waka Hauora/Maori Health & Vulnerable Populations, Nelson Marlborough Health

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**Hapu wananga: kaupapa Maori pregnancy and parenting programme**

Te Waka Hauora, Maori Health and Vulnerable populations has set up the first South Island hapu wananga or kaupapa Maori pregnancy and parenting programme.

The hapu wananga programme covers mainstream and traditional Maori practices relating to pregnancy and birth. It operates from a kaupapa Maori or Maori philosophy base with tikanga or Maori protocols observed, including karakia, mihi mihi (speeches of welcome) and whanaungatanga (introductions) and mihi mutunga (farewell speeches). The programme is designed to bring whanau back to Maori traditions. An understanding of Maori language is not required for the programme as it is conducted mainly in English.

The hapu wananga covers the birthing process, safe sleep, smoke free whanau, drugs and alcohol, nutrition, the benefits of immunisation, the importance of breastfeeding, and the importance of bonding with baby and handling baby with care. The programme aims to inform and educate whanau about issues and when required link them to services that can assist.

On completion of the programme whanau are given a wahakura or flax woven bassinet which comes with a mattress, sheets, merino blankets, baby clothes and accessories. The wahakura can be used along with safe sleep practices.

Ditre Tamatea, General Manager Maori Health and Vulnerable Populations says over 80 per cent of Maori whanau nationally do not access mainstream pregnancy and parenting programmes. Tamatea hopes to reverse this trend.

“The poor health and socio-economic statistics, and the need to get a strength-based programme in place for Maori is why the programme has been launched in Nelson Marlborough,” he says. “In three years we believe we will have over 80 per cent of Maori whanau who are expecting a pepe (baby) engaged in our hapu wananga programme.”

Funding was endorsed by Nelson Marlborough Health as part of its ongoing investment in programmes that seek to work towards health equity for Maori as a high needs population group.

Ditre Tamatea says organisers have worked hard to eliminate any barriers to attendance on the programme.

The programme will operate in a number of diverse settings including community halls birthing centres and on local marae and may be held in Young Parent school units.

Hapu wananga have been held in Picton, Motueka and now in Nelson. A further nine hapu wananga are scheduled for 2019 in multiple locations across the Nelson Marlborough district.

The programme targets Maori whanau, with mothers, partners and wider whanau welcome. It is open to all, not just first time parents. There is no cost and transport is provided if required. Kai is also provided.

The hapu wananga programme is a partnership programme between Te Waka Hauora Nelson Marlborough Health Maori Health and Maternity Services; local Maori providers and Waka Whenua, a local Maori business which encourages Maori whanau to uphold the traditional practice of burying babies' whenua or placenta back into papatuanuku to cement the connection back into their ancestral lands.

Hapu Wananga is one of over 20 Maori health equity projects led by Te Waka Hauora Maori Health and Vulnerable Populations, in conjunction with partners within the health and other related sectors, seeking to support health and wellbeing for Maori whanau in the Top of the South.