



Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

SPRING 2024

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Editorial

We've been blessed with a very wet spring. You can almost hear the weeds grow! So, it is nice to know that we have just completed another successful planting season on the awa, with more than 4000 new plants in the ground; not only planted but many of them mulched as well.

This spring edition celebrates the amazing volunteers who have made this possible, in a multitude of ways. In 'hot off the press' news, we are pleased to welcome a new community group in the Whakawhiti Loop area. We also have a new sponsor, The Collective, a local yoghurt-maker. Plus, if you've ever paused to wonder who is behind the homemade baking that magically appears at the end of our working bees ... the mystery is solved – we introduce our Creek Caterers. You will also find articles on an elegant, if raucous, Australian immigrant and a delicate cup fungi.

Marin has some insightful reflections on spring, the season of new beginnings. If you feel inspired to contribute, we are still looking for a secretary and



Photo (above): Oakley Loop Group in action

more volunteers to help with pest control. There are lots of ways you can nurture the awa and be part of this community.

Enjoy!
Gina Hefferan, Editor

Monthly Working Bees

By Wendy John

In August our wonderful volunteers did their last big planting of the season, in the 'rock forest' up opposite Pak'nSave. As with the last rock forest planting, this was a challenging one, with some of the area being an old quarrying site, with lots of rocks to con-

tend with. Our local archaeologist, Brent Druskovich, was also on site to give the volunteers a briefing on the archaeology in the area, and to be on hand in case any further archaeological evidence was found – which it wasn't.

And, with the main planting season behind us and the weather starting to warm up, in September the volunteers were back on the job of clearing weeds from around some of the plants that were put in last year.



Photo (above): Monthly Working Bee team



Photo (above): Monthly Working Bee tackling the weeds

"Thank you so much for today, we had heaps of fun with you guys and learnt heaps from you too."

Sharna – Volunteer and Unitec biodiversity student

Friday Working Bees

By Wendy John

Our Friday crew has been doing some great work at various sites across the awa – some in not-so-pleasant weather. As per normal, at this time of the year, activities have included more clearance of weeds – privet, black wattle, blue morning glory, *Tradescantia*, Madeira vine and more, some general tidying up of dead / fallen trees, plus some infill planting and mulching. One session was tidying up an area in the rock forest for a community planting. This included one of our

regular volunteers, Martin, constructing some cool steps (one of his specialties) to make it safe for volunteers to get down to the planting site.

Sites have included an area behind the Waterview Connection vent stack on Great North Road, Harbutt Reserve, Waterview Glades, Phyllis Reserve, a floodplain area down behind Unitec and a rock forest area up opposite Pak'nSave. We certainly get around!



Photo (above): Friday Working Bee Team



Photo (above): Martin making steps

Corporates and Beyond Volunteers

By Wendy John

The Collective – We are thrilled to announce that New Zealand based yoghurt-maker, The Collective, is now sponsoring us. And, not only are they sponsoring for the purchase of plants, but they are also helping out with the restoration of a small area down the creek. Our first working bee and tree planting with a team from their base, just over the hill in Avondale, was a fun and productive occasion. Check them out on – <https://www.thecollective.kiwi>



Photo (above): The Collective tree planting

Pattle Delamore – One of our committee members, Cate Ryan, organised a team from her workplace to lend a helping hand with clearing rubbish from Howlett Reserve, as part of Plastic Free July. The work was challenging, but the team did an amazing job of clearing a heap of rubbish from part of an area that has since been planted.



Photo (above): Pattle Delamore group

Nova – A small group from Nova joined us on one of our Friday Working Bees. It was great to have the extra helpers to move mulch down the slippery slope to put around the young plants.



Photo (above): Nova group

Community Group Activities

By Wendy John

Our local partner groups have certainly not been slacking these past few months.

Oakley Loop Group: The Oakley Loop area had a couple of visits by contractors, Te Ngahere, to prepare the site for planting. The local volunteers have had two working bees – one in the winter to do some much-needed weed control around the existing plantings. And then, more recently, they were at the site to undertake their annual planting – another 100 plants. These working bees always end up with a cup of tea and some home baking around the table of one of the whanau.



Photo (above): Oakley Loop Group

A Rocha – The weather was perfect for another planting by our wonderful A Rocha community which took place in August, on the floodplain at the end of Cradock Street, opposite Harbutt Reserve – with 130 plants safely embedded in the ground.



Photo (above): A Rocha group

Point Chevalier Girl Guides – The Pt Chevalier Girl Guides were back on the job again. This time to do some extra planting, mulching and rubbish removal. Their site is really starting to take shape. Well done, Guides!



Photo (above): Pt Chev Girl Guides Planting

Cradock Street Sustainable Neighbourhoods – Serendipity is a wonderful thing. Just when I was about to contact the folk at the end of Cradock Street about putting some more plants in the ground on the esplanade reserve, one of them contacted me. Apart from the contractors helping out with some weed control the neighbour has done some hard mahi, clearing more privet. And, a few weeks later, we had a small, but energetic group of neighbours and friends come together to put 130 plants in the ground.



Photo (above): Cradock St Esplanade Reserve planting

Whakawhiti Loop Group – Hot off the Press! For nigh on seven years, a resident of the Whakawhiti Loop, at the end of Trent Street, has been wanting to bring members of the community together to do some planting on the small area of reserve land at the bottom of their 'loop'. Finally, success! While the group was small, owing to it being the start of the school holidays, we got all 65 plants in the ground. Well done, Rebecca and team, and welcome to our extended Te Auaunga community!



Photo (above): Whakawhiti Loop Group

Outreach Report

By Sandra Maclean

We reached an impressive 1000 volunteer hours for the Waterview Heritage Area over the last 12 months from our regular Tuesday morning sessions. It is fantastic to see this site continue to improve in leaps and bounds, with the support of our local volunteers as well as Sustainable Coastlines and Conservation Volunteers New Zealand (CVNZ). Get yourself down there the next Tuesday morning you are free, to check out progress.



Photo (above): Planting at back of Mt Roskill Police Station



Photo (above): CVNZ and local volunteers after Stoddard Road Tributary planting

In July we had a 20 strong group of Unitec students help us remove *Tradescantia*, whilst they learnt about local environmental issues and how we operate as a small not-for-profit organisation with big ambitions.

Westpac and two ANZ corporate teams came out to help control tree privet below the BP filling station on Great North Road. They turned out to be very handy with saws and exceeded all expectations in terms of trees brought down and eco-stacks created.

In September we ran an event on a tributary of our awa which lies at the back of Mt Roskill Police Station on Stoddard Road. This was a true community event which was supported by Auckland Council Healthy Waters, Kāinga Ora, as well as the CVNZ New Migrant Group, the Whānau Hub and local businesses. We got over 100 plants in the ground, mulched and marked with bamboo canes, and then enjoyed some spectacular shared kai from the local businesses. We are looking forward to more sessions at this site with the local community and CVNZ, to ensure our plants get away.

Te Ngahere – Part of the Team

By Wendy John

Apart from doing the site preparation for our main planting sites and controlling more tree privet (a work in progress), this planting season ecological contractors, Te Ngahere, have planted two sites for us that are difficult for volunteers to work on. One was a very steep slope opposite Phyllis Reserve, where another 100 plants went in the ground. The other is Howlett Reserve, adjacent to the tidal reach of Te Auaunga, in Waterview. We have been working on further restoring this reserve for five years now, and it is really starting to look good. The contractors put in another 475 plants this year.



Photo (above): Te Ngahere Team at Howlett Reserve

Water Monitoring on the Awa

By Wendy John

A large group of Unitec students studying freshwater ecology visited the creek recently. They undertook a water monitoring session at the waterfall. This included checking the water clarity, pH, nitrate and phosphorous levels, and water and air temperature. The students also did a survey of the macroinvertebrate life in the awa. And, while not macroinvertebrates, it was exciting to see a good number of young banded kokopu chilling out in the water. It's always a delight to have the awa being used by tertiary students as part of their studies and research.

Pollution Detective!! – Us / you, the general public, need to be the guardians of our waterways. If you ever see or smell anything unusual in a stream it is crucial that you report it to Auckland Council asap on 301 0101. The sooner they can send a member of their pollution team out to investigate the incident, the better chance they have of finding where it comes from and stopping it.



Photo (above): Unitec Students Water Monitoring



Photo (above): Banded Kokopu

Rubbish, Rubbish and More Rubbish

By Wendy John

The wonderful group, Earth Action Trust, visited again back in August to remove any rubbish that was hanging around. With the big group of 30 volunteers, they did an amazing job of clearing the area around Waterview Glades. A key part of their role is educating people about how to reduce, reuse and recycle, which involves a rather messy job of sorting the rubbish.



Photo (above): Earth Action Trust Rubbish Clean Up

And, EAT then did an amazing clean up around the Stoddard Road shops which included the Te Auaunga – Oakley Creek tributary behind the Gull Service Station and Mt Roskill Police Station. What wonderful litter busting heroes!

<https://www.facebook.com/earthactiontrust/posts/pfbid029pD8QDm-Hqsuep8g8vngoHaJJ9iPXcli6iGmcGC3KEXaQDPjb3Zry1NJq4StoUQMRI>



Photo (above): Earth Action Trust group

Te Ara-rata Stream Team Tour of Underwood & Walmsley Parks

By Wendy John

Prior to a hikoi along the Te Ara-rata Stream by representatives from the 'stream team', they were taken on a hikoi through Underwood & Walmsley Parks to hear about what had worked for us, with regards to community consultation and input into the restoration work of our awa in these parks. This was as part of the preparation



Photo (above): Te Ara-rata Stream Team (Mishka, Pragna & Julia)



Photo (above): Te Ara-rata Stream Team

for some intensive local consultation about implementing a) Community Flood Resilience, and b) Blue-Green Networks in Māngere. Some of the issues they wanted to look at and discuss, were examples of stormwater treatment and other points of interest on Te Auaunga, and the effects of flooding, whether floods are managed better since the restoration work was undertaken, and whether there is an increase in bird life, use as recreation space etc.

Unitec Students on the Awa

By Wendy John

It's been a busy time these past few months with Unitec students visiting the creek on a number of occasions. This has included a group from the Bridgepoint – Bridging Education programme

(refer to the Outreach Report); one from the School of Natural Sciences (see 'water monitoring') and three from the School of Architecture and Landscape.



Photo (above): Unitec Landscape Architecture students

Springtime and New Beginnings

By Marin Adams

Several weeks ago, I heard the distinctive seven notes of the pīpīwharauoa sounding out from amongst the trees alongside Te Auaunga. The “long journeying bird” was back from the northern hemisphere and as Māori would say *Ka tangi te pīpīwharauoa, ko te karere a Mahuru*. The call of the shining cuckoo is telling us that spring is here.



Photo (above): Pīpīwharauoa, Birdson-Line, (Duncan Watson)

Spring is a time of new beginnings. For Māoridom a much-respected leader, Kīngi Tuheitia, has been succeeded by his daughter, Te Arikinui Kuini Ngā Wai Hono i te Po. At 27 years of age, she represents a new voice. To quote Te Tiriti o Waitangi lawyer Annette Sykes “She’s inspiring, the revitalisation and reclamation of our language has been a 40-year journey for most of us and she epitomises that, it is her first language, she speaks it with ease. Political, economic and social wellbeing for our people is at the heart of what she wants”.



Photo (above): Te Arikinui Kuini Ngā Wai Hono i te Po (RNZ news on-line)

Her grandmother, Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, was very circumspect about maintaining political neutrality. Her father less so. His call for a hui ā motu earlier this year to discuss how to respond to the government’s plans to dismantle the previous government’s pro-Māori initiatives, embodied the founding concept of Kotahitanga, that is, unity of purpose. The new queen has been quoted in the press as saying (in te reo) “I have a loud mouth, so I need to be careful.” And I am sure she will, without losing sight of her vision for the future wellbeing of Māori. The season of springtime is known for the energy of its wild and tempestuous weather, so we shall wait and see.

Kōanga is the word Māori used to describe the season of spring (September to November). The name refers to ‘kō’, a digging tool. For Māori, this time of year was when the digging stick was used to do the backbreaking work of breaking up the soil prior to planting kumara. Spring is when I take photos of drifts of white michelia blossoms, and pick freesias to fill the house with perfume. I am grateful for the privilege, as a superannuitant, of not having to be in paid work.



Photo (above): Nga ringaringa

He rau ringa e oti ai – Many hands make light work. This whakatauki applied in the past, but also relates to the present day. Friends of Oakley Creek’s aim is to restore Te Auaunga. We invite you, the reader, to continue to participate this season, whether it is planting seedlings, helping trap predators that kill our newly hatched birds or making regular donations. And thank you to those of you who have done so much in the past.

References:

- <http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/sep/05/maori-queen-nga-wai-hono-i-te-po-paki-new-zealand>
- <https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Inspiring-Communities-%E2%80%93-Whakatauki-information-sheet.pdf>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/tawhirimatea-the-weather/>
- <https://toitangata.co.nz/2016/09/28/ka-tangi-te-pipiwharauoa/>

Matuku Moana – an Elegant Immigrant

By **Marin Adams**

Sometimes, out of the corner of my eye, I see a large bird, awkwardly flapping its wings as it tries to gain height. As soon as I hear a loud gravelly croak, I know what it is. A white-faced heron, otherwise known as a matuku moana. There was a family that used to nest in an old tree near the creek, just down from our house. With all the new housing around us, they seem to have moved on. Herons are very good at adapting and have multiplied and spread around New Zealand since self-introducing in the 1940s. Until I did some reading to prepare for this article, I did not know our herons were Australasian. As a New Zealander, I have always loved the sweet birdsong of our native species. I should have known the heron was not truly one of us. Its cry is way too loud and harsh.



Photo (above): Matuku moana NZBirdsonLine (Adam Clarke)

A few facts about matuku moana. The scientific name of the white-faced heron is *Egretta novaehollandiae*: novaehollandiae meaning Australian and egretta meaning egret. So, all egrets are herons, but not all herons are egrets. The white-faced heron is assigned the identification of egret because of its appearance and behaviour. It is a tall, elegant, bird with yellow legs, that can be seen stalking its prey near water. In flight the white-faced heron usually tucks its head back towards its shoulders in the characteristic heron posture. Foraging white-faced herons walk slowly with long, controlled steps, watching for any signs of prey, which they then grab with lightning speed.

You may come across a matuku moana as you walk or ride along the Shared Path. They are habituated to humans and know we will not be competing for the food they enjoy – insects, lizards, mice and small fish. They will, however, display aggression when they are stalking prey and another matuku comes too close.

I used to see the herons nesting at Long Bay Beach when we lived there. As a new parent, albeit human, I was surprised their offspring survived. The nest was inevitably up high, maybe 10 metres off the ground, in an old macrocarpa. The nest itself was an untidy collection of sticks, seemingly without form. Given they have such long legs, I thought it surprising matuku moana would choose the confined space of a branch in a tree for their breeding place. The fact they are now the



Photo (above): Matuku moana nestlings NZBirdsonLine (Adam Clarke)

most common large bird in New Zealand, and not endangered, shows the competitive advantage of their instinctual behaviour.

References:

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/birds/heron-vs-egret-whats-the-difference>

<https://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/white-faced-heron>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-faced_heron

Layered Cup Fungi – *Peziza varia*

By **Wendy John**

This wee treasure was found in the Water-view Heritage Area in July. Apart from New Zealand, it is widely distributed throughout America and Europe, and also found on the east coast of Australia. It is often found in association with rotting wood and woodchip garden mulch. It is also commonly known as the *spreading brown cup fungus*, *Palomino cup* or *recurved cup*.

The fruiting body is cup-shaped and up to 30 mm across. The inner surface is smooth and brown (at maturity), while the outer surface is pale, often almost white, and minutely fuzzy. This species is rather similar to other members of the same genus, but it can usually be distinguished by the distinctly layered flesh seen when a specimen is cut.

Peziza means a sort of mushroom without a root or stalk.

Common name: Layered Cup

Found: Urban gardens

Substrate: Wood chip

Spore: White

Height: 30 mm

Width: 100 mm

Season: Autumn

Edible: No

Reference:

***Peziza varia* – The Hidden Forest**

<https://uk.inaturalist.org/taxa/411300-Peziza-varia>



Photo (above): Layered cup fungi

Our Creek Caterers

By Gina Hefferan

After a strenuous planting or weeding session, there's nothing nicer than a piece of home baking. That's part of the Ngā Ringa o Te Auanga – Friends of Oakley Creek magic. You may have wondered who is behind this magic. Who are our wonderful Creek Caterers? What is it that motivates them?

When Linley started work at Carrington Hospital in 1975, Te Auanga – Oakley Creek was talked about as somewhere dangerous, as somewhere that you didn't go alone. When she moved to Avondale a decade or so later, she noticed that the creek had become a more welcoming place. It got better and better, seemingly by itself. It wasn't until she moved to Powell Street that she began to realise the amount of work that was involved in transforming it.



Photo (above): Linley

It was in community meetings to address concerns about a proposed housing development in the street that she first met Wendy, who provided environmental input to the group. The proposed development included land which was boggy. The community was concerned that the development could become something of a ghetto. Part of Linley's land included a steep slope with an ancient pine. When the developer chopped it down for safety reasons, the weeds took over. Wendy and neighbours helped to plant the slope with natives.

Linley is someone who loves being in nature. She knew that the creek would not be the special place it is without a huge amount of work from a large team of people. She wanted to do something to contribute to its care, but knew that she didn't have the energy, the agility and the upper body strength for the volunteering work. When the suggestion was made that she could contribute baking, she thought, "I can do that!"



Photo (above): Volunteers at the October working bee contemplate the feast (Teresa Ma)

Linley likes to bake. For almost three years now she has regularly baked to supply Friends of Oakley Creek volunteers with homemade goodness to fuel their endeavours. She believes in what can be achieved when everyone works together according to their energy levels and skill. It gives her great satisfaction to hear how much her baking is appreciated.

Chris had a different route to becoming a Creek Caterer. She can recall very clearly the impetus that set her on that path. It was in 2020 on the inter-island ferry! She was returning to Auckland after 6 months away within New Zealand. She would now have more time for volunteering but hadn't decided how best to use that time. In the crowded café, she shared a table with a young man with an open laptop and his earphones in. When she sat down, he closed the laptop and took his earphones off. He chose to chat. It turned out he was an ecologist who had been working at Outward Bound. In the ensuing conversation, Chris asked for his suggestions. "Do something with your local catchment!" was his advice.

Chris had previously volunteered at the creek, but due to a recent elbow injury, weeding was no longer possible. She turned up to say "hi" to the workers with a tin of baking, and that's how it started. When her elbow had recovered, she went along to the Friday and monthly working bees, but an increasingly dodgy hip made them physically difficult. Instead, she now bakes for our community working bees that happen on the first Sunday of every month, indeed, she takes great pleasure in providing a feast. She now usually



Photo (above): Chris

provides savoury muffins, a cake and biscuits. She tries to vary the offering with the seasons.

There has been the occasional baking mishap, where cakes have become slices. Her repertoire includes some old family recipes, and she likes to vary the menu incorporating feedback and requests. She tries to cater for some food allergies, listing the ingredients on the tins.

Her motivation? It's her way of enhancing the community connections. For volunteers who have participated in the working bees, it's a chance to stop, sit, enjoy some nourishment, and to connect. "Baking is bonding!"

Seasonal gallery

The gallery in this spring edition has a sunshiny gold theme. The kōwhai (*Sophora*) trees on the creek have put on a particularly spectacular display this year. The nectar is a favourite of tui and bees. Kererū eat the petals and leaves.

Other sightings on the creek include delicate, fragranced māhoe flowers (*Melicytus ramiflorus*), fluffy kūmerahou blossom (*Pomaderris kumeraho*), the slightly hairy hangehange flower clusters (*Geniostoma ligustrifolium*) and the tiny star-shaped pukatea flowers (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*).



Photo (above): Kōwhai flowers



Photo (above): From left to right, clockwise: Māhoe, kūmerahou, hangehange and pukatea flowers

Notices

Monthly Community Working Bees: As per normal, our monthly working bees are held on the first Sunday of each month – 10.00am-12.00noon.

Tuesday Working Bees: – Tuesday mornings 9.30am to 12.00pm. This exciting project is looking for some more regular volunteers. For more information contact Sandra - 021 166 7647.

Friday Working Bees: Friday mornings 9.00am to 12.00pm. We work in different locations on Friday mornings, depending on the need at the time. If you're interested let us know and we'll include you in the Friday email list so that you can join us when you are free, or contact Wendy – 027 232 6454.

Secretary – we are still needing a secretary. The role requires an eye for detail and an ability to attend (online or in person) committee meetings once a month to take notes and circulate them to committee members. A good knowledge or experience of committee procedures would be helpful but is not essential. We have an enthusiastic committee who will support you in every way possible. If this interests you, please contact David Bowden (Chairperson) on 027 249 1873, Wendy John – 027 232 6454 or email info@oakleycreek.org.nz for further information.

Predator Control & Monitoring – if you are interested in joining our rodent control team, helping with baiting four times a year, on five consecutive Saturday mornings each time (1-1.5 hrs). Plus helping with predator monitoring twice a year – optional. Training and resources are provided – contact Wendy – info@oakleycreek.org.nz

Errata – In the Citizen Science article published in the Winter edition we considered a mystery bird which was identified via iNaturalist as an Asian koen. One of our readers who has some expertise in ornithology, suggests this was in fact an Asian Koel.

Myrtle Rust – a threat to some of our precious native trees

Source: Manawa Taiao – Urban Ark Newsletter – October 2024

Myrtle rust is a serious threat to some iconic native plants of Aotearoa such as pōhutukawa, ramarama and maire tawake (swamp maire). Representatives from STEPS (St Lukes Environmental Protection Society) and Friends of Oakley Creek – Te Auaunga, with Urban Ark in support, recently met Plant & Food plant pathologist Dr Robert Beresford to learn about how to manage myrtle rust, in order to help prevent the loss of the few remaining specimens of swamp maire in inner-west Auckland. This aligns with work being

undertaken by other community groups in the wider Auckland region, such as Pest Free Kaipatiki.

The groups hope to keep the remaining trees alive and healthy by treating them with a fungicide spray, so they can produce seeds for propagating. Ultimately, it may be possible to identify resistant individuals to breed from, but this is far from certain. Staying ahead of this pathogen is not going to be easy, but you can help buy time for our vulnerable native species. Check out this short **video** to learn more about myrtle rust and the simple steps you can take, to stop it spreading from exotic trees in your backyard, like



Photo (above): Myrtle Rust site visit to Te Auaunga

Lilly Pilly. To help authorities track the spread of this pathogen it's also helpful if you can record sightings using the free and fun **i-Naturalist** phone app.

Gift a Tree

By Wendy John

We know it's a little early to be talking about Christmas. But we thought we'd 'sow the seed' – or you can 'gift a tree' any time of the year. Most of the storm debris has been removed, but the urgent need to restore our native biodiversity and habitat is still with us. As the old proverb says – “*The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.*”

Need an inspiring gift idea?

Give a tree to plant on Te Auaunga – Oakley Creek ...

Just \$20 gives:

- a native tree – to be planted at Te Auaunga – Oakley Creek on your behalf (or by your recipient or you)
- an attractive commemorative card – with the details of your gift
- membership of Friends of Oakley Creek – for one year



Photo (above): A tree is a gift that keeps on giving

Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

Chairperson:

David Bowden

Treasurer:

Matthew Hill

Secretary:

TBC

Committee:

Wendy John, Adrienne Stanton, John Stevenson, Cate Ryan, Chris Brown

Newsletter Editor: Gina Hefferan

Newsletter Photos: Unless otherwise credited, all photos are by Wendy John



Newsletter contributions and comments are welcome – email info@oakleycreek.org.nz

We welcome more members (\$10.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' – Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible.

Contributions can be made directly; our bank account number is 38-9003-0978224-00.

You can also find us at <http://oakleycreek.org.nz/> and <https://www.facebook.com/OakleyCreek>

We gratefully acknowledge the support of Foundation North, The Trusts Community Foundation, the Collective, Robert C Bruce Charitable Trust, Auckland Council, Albert-Eden, Puketāpapa and Whau Local Boards and the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS).

