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SPEECH NOTES

**Release of the Taskforce on Whanau Centred Initiatives
Hon Tariana Turia, Minister Responsible for Whanau Ora
Thursday 8 April 2010**

While we are gathered here today, in the whare at Tamatekapua, within Ohinemutu village, a great man lies in state. Don Stafford, historian, scholar, and author will be sorely missed by those who described him as “Rotorua’s Pakeha kaumatua”.

Amidst all of the praise and honour of his achievements, the true greatness of the man was revealed in a comment from his son Mac, who called his father “*an unbelievably fantastic father, grandfather and great grandfather*”. Mac spoke of his fondest memory being of his 58 years of absolute love received from his father.

It is a rare thing, indeed, to see the impact of a person within their whanau publically elevated and celebrated in such a way.

Today, we dare to break that pattern, and to speak instead of new ideals, new hopes, new aspirations; which focus on whanau resilience, capacities and capability.

We will talk about the potential for whanau growth and the opportunities for whanau to become self-managing.

And we do so from a position of strength, of having faith in our families, in believing in the most powerful force of whanau transformation.

I want to congratulate Sir Mason Durie for the inspirational way in which he has led the Taskforce for Whanau Centred initiatives; and to sincerely thank him and each member of the Taskforce for the significant difference that I know their report will make.

It is with great pleasure that I have received the report on Whanau Ora from the Taskforce members, namely, Sir Mason; Rob Cooper; Nancy Tuaine; Di Grennell and Suzanne Snively.

It is a report which radiates with the learnings and the legacies of our ancestors, while embracing new challenges, new technologies and new practices.

I truly believe that whanau ora has the ability to bring the nation forward through a focus on collective responsibility for our own. It is about families taking up the opportunity to restore to themselves, their rights and responsibilities for each other.

Whanau ora is distinctive in that the driving momentum for change comes from an orientation of group wellbeing. The report describes the views of participants who attended some 22 hui throughout the country, and sent in over one hundred submissions.

They told us that whanau ora is more than the sum total of individual measures. It is primarily about the ways in which the group operates as a whole to achieve health and wellbeing.

The Taskforce suggests also that Whanau Ora is essentially about self-determination and self-management. The aim of the Whanau Ora approach is to enable whanau to assume responsibility for their own affairs.

It is, however, one thing to say that we want to place families at the centre, and in control of achieving their own outcomes; and quite another to achieve this in practice.

The Taskforce provides a strong basis to guide implementation, by encouraging us to understand the importance of ongoing intergenerational transfers as at the heart of the approach.

Sam Chapman, who won the Local Hero category of the New Zealander of the Year Awards, is someone who has made whanau ora a reality in every aspect of the work he is involved in across South Auckland. His persistent challenge is to support people to rise above the seemingly impossible circumstances of their lives and for the sake of whanau to try to create pathways to a different future.

In a recent email to me, Sam told me,

I'm so grateful for the many heroes that have taught me much of what I know. Heroes that are found among our whanau communities. They are our mums and dads who love and care for the most needy and vulnerable among us, who wash and bathe and brush their teeth, expressions of love their only reward.

Whanau ora is, at its very essence, about reminding ourselves of the simple things that matter – the importance of compassion for others, respect, caring for those in need.

Whanau Ora asserts a positive role for whanau within society, and is applied across a wide range of social and economic sectors.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, often refers to the *'five cars up the driveway syndrome'* where multiple agencies work with individual family members often in isolation of each other.

The Taskforce encourages us to consider a new approach which focuses on best outcomes for whanau with integrated delivery systems. They discuss the problems associated in concentrating on input measures such as personnel time, or output measures such as volume and cost, rather than outcome indicators that are relevant to whanau.

The Taskforce presents six key recommendations which attempt to commit to a new way of working with whanau. They ask Government to demonstrate the courage of our commitment to supporting families, by requiring agencies to work better and smarter.

No doubt there will be some who ask why we should invest in whanau ora. I would say to them, that if you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got.

I am heartened by the commitment of a bold Government, and a brave Prime Minister, who are willing to concede that successive administrations have failed to create the long term resolution that we know will lead to the strength of families across the nation.

I acknowledge all of my Ministerial colleagues who have shown in their enthusiasm for this concept, that they are prepared to back whanau, to invest in whanau wellbeing, and to be able to look anew at the challenges confronting families.

In the fullness of time Government will respond to the call for leadership which resonates throughout the Taskforce Report.

The Taskforce asks us to respect the resilience, determination and aspirations of whanau all over the country to forge new pathways.

This is not about simply getting up each morning, putting one foot in front of the other, enduring aching joints, homes which bear the burden of bleak winters, schooling that is yet to focus on the liberation of learning.

The Taskforce ask us to hold the highest ambitions, to raise our sights to the most elevating hope, in order to inspire change.

They challenge us to believe in transformation; to create a spirit of collaboration between funders, providers, practitioners and whanau. They ask us to invest in indigenous innovation; to enable a framework shaped by the unique values and beliefs of tangata whenua, to lead the nation in social change.

And they leave us in no doubt of the importance of this work. I quote from the report,

“If there is a single conclusion to our deliberations it is that the potential within whanau has never been greater and unleashing that potential will not only bring benefits to Maori but will add greatly to the nation and to the prospects of future generations”.

I am delighted to announce today, that a Governance Group has been established to immediately assist in the implementation of Whanau Ora.

That group, chaired by Rob Cooper, will include Sir Mason Durie, Nancy Tuaine and the Chief Executives of Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health.

In its composition the group builds on the momentum generated by the Taskforce; retains that vital cutting edge feedback we need to keep us connected to whanau while also benefiting from the expertise of three very significant agencies across the state sector.

The Ministry of Social Development has played a vital role in taking up the responsibility of the Taskforce and in getting us to this point today, and I want to thank Peter Hughes and his team for their considerable support.

Over the last nine months there has been a senior officials group established from right across the social sector, a Ministerial Committee on Whanau Ora, the Taskforce Secretariat – and indeed I know a virtual press gallery of our own has been created around this kaupapa. I thank you for your commitment, and encourage us all to continue to focus on recognising the potential that exists within each and every family, for greatness.

Finally, I want to thank Te Puni Kokiri for hosting this event today, and acknowledge the special guests we will hear from – Sir Mason Durie, Hon Bill English, Whanau Champion, Naida Glavish, and some of the mokopuna from Te Puna Reo Kohanga.

It is our mokopuna who will be our most significant stakeholders in Whanau Ora; and it is only right that we focus on the promise they inspire in us all, to shape a better future for them. Let the children lead us forward.

Tena tatou katoa.
