**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**12 August 2024**

Hine ki te Wheiao is a collective of young māmā, mātua kua whakawhānau, and clinical professionals, formed to develop and implement an action plan focussing on cross-sector aligned advocacy actions. Through sharing their experiences of judgement, racism, cisheterosexism, and discrimination, the collective seeks to prioritise the voices of young whānau. Led by the lived experiences of whānau Māori and kaimahi Māori within the sector, Hine ki te Wheiao has been formed to develop and implement actions where motivation to create change is instilled, systems are challenged and voices of young whānau Māori are heard.

Despite concerted efforts to improve perinatal health outcomes in New Zealand, a recently released report covering the period 2007 - 2021, has highlighted persistent challenges in reducing overall maternal mental health statistics. Mātua taiohi have limited access to proper care, because they are positioned as “youth” and are assumed to be inadequate parents. Mātua takatāpui are excluded and discriminated against in very similar ways. Current health systems norms and values devalue the mana of mātua taiohi in the same way they do the mana of mātua takatāpui, although this is experienced in different ways. Hine ki te Wheiao has been formed to address these concerning issues.

The report, compiled over 15 years, shows that wāhine Māori had over three times the suicide rate of New Zealand Europeans. This highlights ongoing challenges and especially for mātua taiohi (young parents) who are often discriminated against for having pēpi at a young age and cannot find adequate access to the care and support they deserve during hapūtanga.

Member, Joanna Teina, indicates *“thesixteenth report, all with similar recommendations that have yet to be actioned, not surprisingly, the culturally competent workforce has never been a priority and yet the reports recognises that connection to culture and culturally safe care is what works to ensure not just māmā but the whole whānau feel well”.*

Although young parent pregnancy rates are declining, young parents continue to face many challenges. Mātua taiohi continue to experience significant poor outcomes, and urgent focus on systems to provide support to this group is desperately needed. Collective movements like Hine ki te Wheiao, have a commitment to supporting mātua taiohi Māori, hapū māmā and their whanau to access adequate care during hapūtanga, and to not be discriminated against just because of their age and ethnicity.

Young mother, Hineraukura Martin, mentions that *“as a young Māori Māmā with lived perinatal mental health challenges within a system I struggled to trust, Hine ki te Wheiao is a like a breath of relief. Having a by Māori for Māori action group creates a sense of safety and security… we as Māori are continuously successful at repaving prosperous paths for our own… for our struggling māmā and whānau including myself, Hine ki te Wheiao gives hope. It re-establishes the importance of who we are as Māori māmā. It assures us that our voices are heard and matter.”*

Hine ki te Wheiao is committed to supporting mātua taiohi, mātua takatāpui and wahine Māori in creating pathways toward accessible, acceptable, and supportive care during hapūtanga, free from discrimination, racism, and cisheterosexism. In line with the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee, maternal mortalities within Aotearoa are avoidable and unjust, representing a national failure to support the most vulnerable groups within our communities. Within this context, Hine ki te Wheiao has picked up the wero to walk alongside whānau Māori, to ensure their needs are met, and whānau are empowered throughout their hapūtanga and are properly supported in raising their pēpi.

A big thank you to our founding members.