

## Autism New Zealand to deliver Early Support Services in Wellington

---

Autism NZ is pleased to be taking over the delivery of early support service Raupī te Raupō from 2025.

Raupī te Raupō is a free, world-leading and neuro-affirming programme for young children who are autistic or showing signs of autism, and their families.

To date, the programme has been delivered by Victoria University of Wellington from Autism NZ's Autism Resource Centre in Petone, Wellington. Shifting the provision of services to Autism NZ enables families to navigate services more easily, with simple access to outreach, diagnostic and other services, all housed with the same accessible building.

Evidence clearly shows that early support – before age five – is essential to ensure that autistic children have the opportunity to achieve their future goals, including the most success possible within schooling and beyond.

Autism NZ is proud to already be delivering EarlySteps and Let's Play from Auckland, which are both programmes for young children who are autistic or showing signs of autism. Autism NZ also delivers Way to Play to hundreds of whānau and professionals nationwide every year. Way to Play is an education programme designed to encourage joyous play with autistic tamariki. Further, Autism NZ is an approved provider of the Ministry of Education funded SELO (Strengthening Early Learning Opportunities) for ECE professionals.

Adding a further early support service to our provision is an exciting step forward as we work to meet the huge need for services for autistic children in New Zealand. Expanding our provision into Wellington is also an essential and positive step, as we work to ensure that children nationwide have equitable access to services.

The reality that many whānau across New Zealand face is extended waitlists or a complete lack of services in their area. In other cases, parents are directed towards strict, outdated styles of intervention that autistic adults identify as harmful at best, and traumatic at worst.

Raupī te Raupō was developed by Victoria University of Wellington in collaboration with an autistic and Māori advisory group, alongside professional experts. This ensures a programme that truly supports autistic children's needs.

We are grateful that our close partnership with Victoria University of Wellington will ensure that Raupī te Raupō will continue to be part of research projects that affirm the need for autism-specific support services. This research helps us to continue to advocate the autistic and wider autism communities to have access to essential and affirming services.

Contact:

**Dane Dougan**  
Chief Executive

022 639 0205

dane.dougan@autismnz.org.nz

**Kirsti Whalen-Stickley**  
Communications Manager

02102656284

kirsti.whalen-stickley@autismnz.org.nz