

Regional Feedback from Rangatahi Action Plan Research

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Summary

Rangatahi in communities across Eastern and Central Community Trust's region (Gisborne/Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay, Tararua, Manawatū, Horowhenua, Wairarapa) felt strong connections to their hometowns; *"I love Wairoa for the people here"*. They placed a lot of importance on whakapapa and whenua for their wellbeing and development as they grow up; *"Marae and knowing who you are is central to who we are."* (Wairoa).

Rangatahi in the smaller towns across the region often felt torn between wanting to stay in their hometowns but also feeling like they had to leave to find meaningful employment and education opportunities.

Across the region, there was a strong theme that rangatahi want to share their thoughts and ideas and feel more valued by their community; *"There are good people here who believe in youth and help where they can but we need more leaders who make the decisions believing in young people."* (Tararua)

They want to see opportunities for more diverse rangatahi and those not currently heard to have a voice and lead projects in their communities. Many rangatahi had dreams and aspirations for developing their own projects and businesses. They talked about the need for more positive role models, mentors and coaches who can help rangatahi explore different opportunities and develop skills.

"It would be good to have people who work with young people from the beginning of college and who stay helping you as you grow up. Not about problems. More about helping you because they see you as going to be a great person as you grow up. Like a mentor." (Wairarapa)

Across the region, rangatahi talked about safe and connected youth spaces which offer them a sense of belonging. In some communities, rangatahi talked about the spaces they love that provide this and in others, rangatahi talked about a need for community spaces where rangatahi feel safe and can connect into opportunities. They talked about the importance of having places to be safe and loved; *"community places which not just help young people but who want us and work with us like we are valuable people with ideas and dreams and stuff."* (Gisborne/Tairāwhiti)

"Youth spaces where we can go and learn things but not be tied into a programme somewhere you can come and go and they are always there, if you need them, like a whanau." (Wairoa)

Rangatahi right across the region talked about the champion youth organisations in their communities. A key part of their success was having youth workers who provide connection, access to opportunities and a sense of belonging; *"I love this place because I go in there and everyone knows me and I can go anytime.... It's like a home. Nowhere else is like that."* (Tararua)

Rangatahi across the region aged 18 and over often struggled with the transition from high school to *"the rest of my life"* and spoke about their desires to have more meaningful employment; *"Many of us are out in the fields rather than chasing our dreams."* (Gisborne/Tairāwhiti)

Access to transport was an issue. Some rangatahi used bus services and cars when they had money but also walked long distances to get around. *"I have a car but it's expensive and I don't choose petrol over other things I need sometimes."* (Hawke's Bay)

Connecting across towns and connecting in with services was a challenge for rangatahi across the region. For those in larger centres, connecting with services was often hard for rangatahi; *“Who do you go to in town who can help you connect into a new place because you don’t know anyone?” (Hawkes Bay)*. Rangatahi in smaller towns in the region struggled with having to access services which were located outside their communities; *“We are out in the middle here of nowhere in some ways. We have to go to Palmy for so many things.” (Taranaki)*

Having positive mental health came up as a theme for rangatahi across the region. They talked about needing to have services which supported good mental health as well as services to support rangatahi struggling with specific mental health issues. *“Mental health is more than just being depressed, that’s the end bit and we need more support with that but what about helping us not get to that place it’s a scary place to help us be in a safe place and work out how to stop going to that place.” (Palmerston North)*

Gisborne/Tairāwhiti

Young people want safe and connected spaces for rangatahi - this was identified more across Te Tairāwhiti than anywhere else in the Eastern and Central Community Trust region. Some acknowledged there is some great support for them from youth organisations based mainly in Gisborne.

“We need like a place here which is for us to come too that’s not a programme for us to hang out and just do our own thing.” They talked about the importance of having places to be safe and loved; *“feel wanted everywhere, community places which not just help young people but who want us and work with us like we are valuable people with ideas and dreams and stuff.”*

Young people in Te Tairāwhiti said that have a sense of belonging and connection was key to their wellbeing; *“Not knowing who I am affects everything”, “Learning and growing in our identity is not a course but places which support that and people who help”*. They talked about the importance of having whānau, mentors, coaches who support rangatahi development; *“Having some people who are on your side no matter what”, “being around whanau, opportunities to rebuild connections with whanau”*

Housing was a key issue for young people in Gisborne; *“need places where you can go live with support ...overnight so you don’t have to stay in whanau who are not good for you and you can have help and safety and people who care.”* The layout of Gisborne was challenging for rangatahi. *“It’s real hard to get around here. I walk around a lot but things are far away from each other and so I don’t go there”*. Access and transport was an issue for rangatahi in small East Coast communities. They wanted to see more services based in their communities relevant for their needs rather than having to relocate or commute to Gisborne. The burden of costs of transport, housing and other basic needs were felt strongly by rangatahi across Te Tairāwhiti.

Young people 17 years and older talked about getting jobs and wanting to have meaningful careers and jobs which grow them; *“ It’s like here you go, go pick fruit, go drive a truck, go for roads. That’s your life. You have no choice.”* *“There needs to be more help with getting a job and thinking about how you can grow in that and move on to other things, steps and things to help you grow in life.”* Young people in this age group also felt that after they left school they had little support to help them with the next part of their journey in life (and want more help). *“When you are at school you don’t think about the people helping you but when you leave it’s like there is no one.”*

Many young people didn’t feel that the opportunity to have a say in Gisborne; *“we want to have a voice but don’t know how to do that.”* Young people wanted more youth led initiatives supported. They talked about having more leadership opportunities and support for business start up. *“We need more things where young people can lead stuff here.”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Riccarda, Gisborne

“I took this opportunity in a way to better my people. It was about speaking on behalf of rangatahi like me because there are more negative effects than positive ones on rangatahi. What I have is a better sense of connection and it’s like a belonging to this rōpū.”

Wairoa

Rangatahi in Wairoa had strong connections to their community; *“I love Wairoa for the people here”*. They placed a lot of importance on whakapapa and whenua for their wellbeing and development as they grow up; *“Marae and knowing who you are is central to who we are.”*

They talked about the need for more positive role models, mentors and coaches who can help rangatahi explore different opportunities and develop skills. They wanted *“people who help you with building dreams and how to make them happen...”*

There was a strong theme of need for more youth spaces where rangatahi feel safe and can connect into opportunities. *“Youth spaces where we can go and learn things but not be tied into a programme somewhere you can come and go and they are always there, if you need them, like a whanau”*

Rangatahi who were 17 and older talked about the challenge of transitioning from high school to *“the rest of my life”*. They felt that there was a gap between the support they had at high school and what their experience was as school leavers; *“When you leave school, you are on your own.”*

There were lots of ideas of things which would help them with this transition including *“Specialised classes or workshops at school that focus on specific dreams and helping us build our future”* and *“Coaches who show you new things. If you’re like ‘I want to try this’, then they help with that.”*

Rangatahi talked about feeling torn between wanting to stay in Wairoa but also feeling like they had to leave to find meaningful employment and education opportunities. There were lots of ideas and solutions shared; *“... there needs to be a chance to create new things, ways to make money and have a good life here. If young people are going to be supported it needs to be in a way which works for us.”* *“More apprenticeships in different areas so you can try things out and develop skills not just in the traditional things”* *“Stuff to help young people follow their dreams”*

Rangatahi thought more support with developing life skills was needed including support with *“expectations of a job, understanding of your rights you don’t know a lot when you leave school.”* *“Have a day to help young people understand all the things about life after school - dentist, housing, transport, healthcare, kai.”*

Rangatahi felt that there was an opportunity in Wairoa for their voices to be heard more by decision makers; *“Rangatahi have great ideas which don’t get heard ... some organisations would get lots of listening to us and working with us”*. *“There are good people here who believe in young people and help where they can but we need more leaders who make the decisions believing in young people”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Piripi, Nuhaka

“Being a part of the ropu has allowed me the opportunity to represent the authentic realness of the rangatahi in my rohe. “We have brought attention to the needs of the young people back home and voicing their struggles and strengths.”

Trevor, Whakaki

“As rangatahi with the support of ECCT, we are working together to create opportunities for others to do good, contribute and give back to their communities and spaces.”

“My aspirations for this is that ALL young people are encouraged to take positive action into their own hands when it comes to developing their communities.”

Hawke's Bay & Central Hawke's Bay

Rangatahi in Hawkes Bay and Central Hawkes Bay had some similarities and differences in their needs and ideas for solutions. Overall, rangatahi wanted good mentors in their lives and more opportunities to connect with people who help them grow and develop skills. Rangatahi talked about organisations which helped them across the rohe. Key factors for rangatahi in these organisations were people who care, a feeling of home and belonging and help with a range of things including job and business, wellbeing and health and developing identity and purpose in life.

"We (society) focus on the negative like oh those kids are on the streets being a pain they want to be in gangs oh they just want to make trouble for us but it's not about that at all. It's about getting to know them and what they want underneath it all. Underneath it's just kids wanting connection and someone to back them. You can't do that in an office, you need a space they can feel at home in like a home."

Many rangatahi talked about young people helping out other young people. Some were volunteer youth workers and youth group leaders and shared the benefits of tuakana teina ways of working with rangatahi younger than them. This was also reflected in the ideas rangatahi shared; *"Young people who mentor other young people but people who have been through what you have been through so you can relate to them."* *"People who are like older brothers in their 20s who know what you are going through and can help and have your back."*

Career development and business development support was also a key area rangatahi wanted support in; *"Careers support is more than here is a job. Getting any job here is easy enough. I am picking apples and thinning kiwifruit. I feel stuck in that. I want to do other things but don't know where to go for help."*

Connecting across towns and connecting in with services rangatahi can access was common across Hawkes Bay and Central Hawkes Bay; *"I moved from Waipawa and it's very spread out here. Who do you go to in town who can help you connect into a new place because you don't know anyone?"*

Housing was an issue for rangatahi in Hawkes Bay with some rangatahi living in emergency accommodation; *"Emergency housing ...places which are comfortable and look after youth which are not the government - you can go there for awhile and you feel looked after not a client but like cared for and welcomed and then you can get people to help you out with other things like jobs and all those things you don't know about. stuff like getting confidence in yourself."*

Tararua

Rangatahi in Tararua loved their community and spoke about organisations in their towns which support their development. A key part of their success was having youth workers who provide connection, access to opportunities and a sense of belonging; *“I love this place because I go in there and everyone knows me and I can go anytime and they say hey there go grab something to eat and stuff. It’s like a home. nowhere else is like that.”* They thought those in community leadership roles could learn more from rangatahi; *“There are good people here who believe in youth and help where they can but we need more leaders who make the decisions believing in young people.”*

Transport and access to services was challenging and rangatahi struggled with some services such as counselling and mental health support being located outside of their communities in Palmerston North; *“We are out in the middle here of nowhere in some ways. We have to go to Palmy for so many things.”* *“I have been to [Palmerston North Youth Health Services] once and it was really good but I haven’t been again because I can’t get there easily.”* *“It would be good to have people who come to Dannevirke more to help us instead of having to get to Palmerston North.”*

The transition from high school to work was hard for many rangatahi; *“When you leave school it’s like there is all this stuff you don’t know and you get lost. I still don’t know what I can do or what there is out there.”* *“Getting a job that is a good one and all the things you don’t have to do when you are at college is hard. More help with leaving college would be good.”*

The importance of youth workers who work in a strengths-based way with rangatahi throughout their high school years and as they transition into adult life was seen as key. *“It’s not about a place, it’s about having people there who are nice and care about you for you, not just about your problems.”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Leeroy, Pahiatua

“The thing I have most enjoyed is meeting new people. They all come from different walks of life and bring unique and fascinating ideas to the group.”

“The best thing about being with the rōpū is being with people who are understanding, who want to make a change and realising that our small communities relate in a way.”

Mihikotukutuku-Maira, Dannevirke

“Rangatahi youth voice is important to me for the action plan because they are our future and their voices need to be heard.”

Mirianna, Woodville

“Our rangatahi are our next leading generation to new ideas. I feel it’s our job to set them up - to destroy (or put in place plans to overcome) any boundaries that we see already now so that they can overcome, conquer and rise up to any challenge.”

“All the mahi is always something to look back on and be proud of, especially when you can see the outcome it can do on the youth in smaller communities.”

Jy, Eketahuna

“The best thing about being in this ropu are the connections I made and huge decision making about future generations and how to develop a sense of knowledge of the mind of young people and what they need and want to be able to strive to their best of ability.”

“I hope the action plan achieves the utmost peak of its duration and to achieve and smash the goals set to a higher standard and then last. I hope to be able to achieve some youth lead programmes in the future and watch and help develop young people.”

Manawatū

Rangatahi in Manawatu were mainly based in Palmerston North. Some rangatahi we spoke with had moved to Palmerston North from other Manawatu communities (or further) to access job and educational opportunities.

Having mentors and youth workers was a key need. Some rangatahi talked about organisations and youth workers who supported them and the benefit of this. Others talked about wanting to have *“someone who is just there when you need them, you don’t need an appointment or a referral to see them because they already know you and you can rely on them if you need help.”*

“She is someone who really believes in young people, she runs projects for young people, things they want and ask for, she is like a leader but she lets them lead.”

“People who understand and don’t judge and help you grow not just counsellors fixing you”

Life skills and support seeking meaningful employment were also important to rangatahi in Manawatu. Rangatahi from small communities talked about getting access to job experiences outside of their towns; *“Getting a taste of different industries or the chance to talk to people who work in different areas.”* *“Trips to big cities where you can experience new things and learn about it .”*

Rangatahi felt there were a lot of services for rangatahi in Palmerston North but it was hard to know what there was and to access services at time; *“There are lots of opportunities here but it is knowing what it is and how to connect in that can be hard sometimes” .”* Rangatahi at university had a different experience and felt well supported on campus; *“ if you are here (at uni) you are well supported. Some of my friends aren’t at uni though and they don’t have like what I can access for support. They are on their own in some ways working it out for themselves and that it’s pretty hard when you are 18/19.”*

The cost of transport was an issue. Some rangatahi used bus services when they had money but also walked long distances to get around. *“To get around here is hard if you don’t live near the centre of town. My car doesn’t have a wof at mo so I can’t get caught out in town.”*

Mental health support came up for some rangatahi and needing to have services which supported good mental health as well as services to support rangatahi struggling with specific mental health issues. *“Mental health is more than just being depressed, that’s the end bit and we need more support with that but what about helping us not get to that place it’s a scary place to help us be in a safe place and work out how to stop going to that place.”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Gayle, Palmerston North

“I am hoping that the action plan will help reach rangatahi that may fall through the cracks in society, and support them to bring out their potential.”

“We want ALL rangatahi to thrive and have a say in their communities.”

Horowhenua

Rangatahi in the smaller communities of Horowhenua talked about the importance of having local activities outside of school. Within Levin and other communities, getting around and in between communities was raised as something rangatahi struggle with, relying on parents and friends to get them to places. *“Levin is real sprawly and I walk around a lot it takes me ages.” “A lot of people are on their learner license or restricted here and we all hit them up for rides because it’s better than walking.”*

Some rangatahi felt it was hard to connect with organisations for the first time; *“It’s hard to walk into a new place and be like I need help or I need a course or what is this place and could I find some people who I might be friends with or who might have some things which I would like to do.”*

Many rangatahi talked about having youth workers and mentors who help them connect and find opportunities; *“it’s like I have all these people who I have to go to and they help with one part of my life but I need a friend, a connecting person who can help me in the in between times. Not just be with me when I have problems.”*

Many felt there was a lack of job opportunities locally but did not want to leave the community when they left school. They talked about wanting more support and understanding around leaving school; *“When you leave school there is a big legit gap between what help you got at school and now.”*

Rangatahi liked their communities in Horowhenua but they thought there were some negative stereotypes of their communities and of rangatahi in their communities. For some, this impacted on how they saw their future in their communities as well. Some of the rangatahi who were employed in Levin had ambitions but felt they did not know how to do this. *“It would be great ...if you are a good worker then [your employer] actually ask you; ‘what are your ambitions?’ and help you there.”*

“On this course I am learning life skills and it has made me think about my goals and not just ‘here is a job, no choice, go do it’ but what do I really want to do in life? When I leave here though, I will just take the job. What else can I do?”

Many rangatahi talked about the importance of having good mental health and wellbeing. *“Mental health is not about counselling only it’s about knowing who you are and growing things you like to do and having fun and meeting people and all that sometimes you need help with that too though.”*

Outside of Levin, local community youth spaces were seen as a key need by rangatahi. This was discussed as a dedicated youth centre but also other places in the community where rangatahi would feel welcomed and have fun. Rangatahi in some of the smaller towns talked about the lack of activities for them to do, feeling bored and having nothing to do; *“... there is nowhere we can go.” “People get bored here. There is nothing to do...”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Geordie, Levin

“The best part of being in this rōpū is being with like minded people who want to make an impact and better the lives of youth in their communities.”

“I am proud that our action plan is for youth, by youth.”

Molly, Levin

“In a short time we have seeked authentic voices from around our rohe, put together an action plan, put together a funding process and given out some funding for our youth led funding project.”

Wairarapa

Wairarapa rangatahi had different ideas and needs, depending on where they lived. Youth groups were significant to rangatahi in some of the smaller communities. Feeling a sense of belonging and connection and having a regular out of school opportunity to interact with other rangatahi and run events and activities was a key benefit; *“We get to do lots of fun stuff and we plan it all out.” “We are all here together, it doesn’t matter who you are.” “I like it here because I can just come in and feel at home and there is kai and we make it our place.”*

Rangatahi identified strongly with their local township, talking about all the different places they know and love. They felt however that community leaders did not listen to them; *“We have a voice here [in this organisation] but outside of that, nah, there is nothing happening, no one listening.”*

Rangatahi connected to youth groups talked about the importance of having youth workers who helped them out and coached them. Other rangatahi also talked about the need for mentors who are outside of school; *“It would be good to have people who work with young people from like the beginning of college and who stay helping you as you grow up. Not about problems. More about helping you because they see you as going to be a great person as you grow up. Like a mentor”*

Having access to free activities and things to do was important across the Wairarapa. Many rangatahi talked about accessing outdoor spaces like parks and rivers to connect with friends and have fun; *“Summer is at the river. Winter is harder because the places are less nice to go to.”* Council facilities like pools and parks were important and they wanted to be involved in upgrades to facilities they used.

While many rangatahi felt ready to leave school, many did not and wanted more support with this transition; *“I feel I don’t have the life skills to survive out of school. I am nervous.” “We don’t know what yet, what we want to do time is moving forward and there’s big pressure to know your future plan for next year. It’s like a big hole there.”*

Across the Wairarapa, rangatahi felt that they needed more support with life skills to help them when they leave school. *“Money. How to do tax. Relationships. Rights stuff. All those things you don’t get taught at school. Things for life. Where do you learn those?”* They talked about mentors and coaches who help them with life skills and also marae and supportive whanau were key in developing life skills; *“You can’t just do a life skills course - you have to learn it from life and have people around who you relate to who can help and be with you.”*

Quotes from ECCT’s Rōpu Taiohi

Wiremu, Masterton

“I have loved hearing about the different whakaaro from the roopu regarding next steps in our communities, and how we can better support not just our communities, but each other. I am very eager to launch the action plan so this can better support rangatahi.”