



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Rātā Foundation wraps up the year with \$854,376 in community grants to the Nelson region**

Rātā Foundation has wrapped up its funding for 2016 with \$854,376 in grant approvals for Nelson community groups, including \$100,000 earmarked for a building project.

Louise Edwards, Chief Executive of Rātā Foundation says through its funding the Foundation wants people to feel connected to, supported by and involved in their community.

“The Nelson community is recognised as a national leader in the volunteering sector, as well as a region which prides itself on its cultural and environmental endeavours. It is also a place which really strives to ensure its most vulnerable people are well supported,” she says.

One project aiming to create positive change is the Safeguarding Children Initiative (SCI) which provides free and inclusive workshops on child protection across the ‘top of the South’. These workshops are supporting children’s workers to identify and respond to child vulnerability.

Over the past five years SCI have developed their community education expertise and they have had a good response from the community leveraging off existing networks to help them generate enthusiasm and engagement for positive change in this area.

Ms Edwards says with changes to the Vulnerable Children’s Act there has been an obvious need for community-wide attitude and behavior change around the protection of vulnerable children.

“SCI have taken these changes on board and their success is reflected in the 5000 people who have attended their seminars over the last five years. Their work is all about empowering the community to safeguard children and young people from neglect and abuse”

3000 people have registered for the SCI eLearning package with 70 new registrations a week throughout New Zealand.

“Safeguarding children and young people is not just one group’s responsibility, the responsibility sits with us all,” says Ms Edwards.

Willow Duffy, general manager and child protection consultant for Safeguarding Children Initiative agrees “Every child has the right to be protected and live free from abuse. We all have a responsibility to support children and be their voice.”

“While New Zealand has one of the worst rates of child abuse in the developed world, we have found there are many people in the community who want to make a difference. Our funding from Rātā Foundation is helping us make that collective voice heard and making a difference for children,” says Ms Duffy.

“Healthy communities have opportunities for people to interact safely, form relationships and share experiences. We recognise social connections can help to reduce isolation and build resilient communities and tangibly support our most vulnerable,” says Ms Edwards.

## **ENDS**

**Contact details for Willow Duffy general manager and child protection consultant for Safeguarding Children are 027 267 7330.**

Attached is a photo of the March for Moko event organised by Safeguarding Children Initiative in conjunction with Nelson Tasman Te Rito. This is a fantastic example of an event that brought the community together to make a stand against child abuse, with more than 600 people marching for Moko. Many of the people who attended the march had attended an SCI seminar.

The photo is of the community standing on the steps of Nelson Cathedral.