



# Sector Leaders' Kōrero Outtakes

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On Tuesday 10 February, Te Pai Ora SSPA hosted five sector leaders at our first webinar for 2026: Andrew Bridgman, acting Chief Executive at Oranga Tamariki; Marion Heeney, Chief Executive at Kia Puāwai; Patrick Gemmell, Kaiwhakahaere Matua Tangata Whenua at Hui E!; Dee Ann Wolferstan, Chief Executive at Ngāti Kahu and Alistair Mason, acting Chief Executive at the Social Investment Agency. Our panel included leaders who were new to their roles and some that were exiting their roles, as well as an iwi perspective. Some key themes came up throughout the wide-ranging conversation. Here we share some of the insightful whakaaro shared by our leaders:

## Collaboration

“I see the relationship between Oranga Tamariki and the sector evolving into a really, big collaborative effort, for want of a better expression. As I have said in other forums, Oranga Tamariki is only one part of this equation. It brings a unique part to it, but I think the wider community, iwi, urban mai authorities, NGOs, are all critical in delivering care. And I see, over time, there would be a much bigger role for the community, and I use that term broadly. Also, over time, we at Oranga Tamariki need to niche into those areas that only the government can do.” – Andrew

“My one-word hope for the sector is Kotahitanga: that concept of unity, togetherness, collective action, shared purpose and how we recognise and value diversity, working together. I think the importance of all of us holding the line on that is critical right now. And we might change things by working better together and being involved together and be part of the conversation about the solutions. So how do we think about competition and collaboration? Because those are two quite challenging things that sit side by side as well.” – Marion

“One word that that characterises what we're doing at the moment in terms of our work program is collaboration. Without that collaboration and without being at the table, it's hard to have a conversation.” – Patrick

## Lessons on leadership

“A leader needs to look beyond tomorrow. That's the important thing and that's what grounds us. What grounds me is I have mokopuna. And they are the greatest success of my life. And if I can't stand in front of them and say that my role here is to help change and motivate what their future looks like, then there is no future because there's no hope in their eyes or in my eyes in giving that to them.” – Dee Ann



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The front line have the answers and it's about supporting them by removing the impediments to deliver on what they need to do. And when people say to me, you've got a tough job, I say, well, actually, no, my job isn't that tough. A tough job is the social workers that work with families that are really, really struggling, that walk into homes that sometimes are inviting and sometimes aren't, and that are able to deal with and work with children that have some specific challenges in a tough environment. So, they're the ones that do the hard mahi." – Andrew

“One thing I learned from the challenges of recent years was keeping up the communication within your organisation, being present and fronting the hard stuff yourself. Also, there is a point at which you go, okay, well, this is the reality here. We fought as hard as we can, now we've just got to get on and accept that this is what's going to happen, much as we didn't like it and we didn't agree with it. A huge amount of resilience and determination is required in making the hard decisions, while being human. You have to have that heart for the people that you're giving really tough messages to.” – Marion

### Te Tiriti

“If we're wanting a Crown/iwi relationship that's meaningful and brings effect to treaty obligations, we just need to start talking to each other, understanding each other. I think we've always been here. I think there's a whole lot of groups on this call now that have committed to that type of relationship in terms of treaty relationship. So, in terms of being able to have a hui, sit down, have a cup of tea, talk about our whānau, talk about our aspirations and talk about what that means to uplift communities. I think it's a good start.” – Patrick

“I think the point of difference is Māori never move from our line of He Whakaputunga and Te Tiriti. The other side may move right, left, up, down, too far the other way. However, our feet are firmly on the ground and don't change. We are an agile group that have moved and if we go traditionally back to Ruapekapeka and wars right through to where we are now, the war is still the same. We were here. We stand firm on our whenua. However, we have adapted, we're agile, we have brave conversations.” – Dee Ann

### Devolution

“Social investment in part is about using data and evidence to build better ways of working and making sure we're really clear about the problems and things that we're trying to address. But a lot of it is also about shifting the decision-making to the most appropriate parts of the system, and that does mean shifting a lot of things out of Wellington. So, our pathways in the Social Investment Fund are designed to test and adopt some of those things in a safe way.” – Alistair



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“In many cases, a problem doesn't sit in isolation, and you need to acknowledge that. If there's an issue with a kid not turning up to school, there may be wider whānau issues, and we may need to look at some of the underlying issues. And I might never be able to understand that context fully. So, my job is to enable the systems, to enable the people who can do that, to make those decisions in a more holistic sense. A lot of what we need to do then is measure it to see if it's what we're doing is working. And then if it's not – that might ultimately mean moving funding but first considering if there's a new approach to ensure those outcomes are met – and making sure those systems are in place..” – Alistair

### Measuring for impact and data collection

“Coming from Ngāti Kahu, we're a sovereign nation, so data is our own sovereignty. We don't like to share our data. And what we reflect on is the data gathering through the IDI is primarily focused on those that have been captured in the system from the perspective of social impact or justice impact. So, there are narratives that are not inclusive in the data, but they (SIA) need a platform to start from. And so we need to be flexible, in terms of the data that we can provide to you from the community saying, actually, we have a different set of data that comes with a different set of narrative that we need to be able to acknowledge, recognise and actually say, this is what we need to impact on what happens from a local perspective.” – Dee Ann

“Data collection needs to be done very thoughtfully. Data is a really important element, but it's not the sole element of what we're collecting here. We also need to think through exactly what data is needed, recognising there's some very sensitive data that is out there; and who needs to see what information?”

The current approach is to do that through Stats NZ and put anonymized data from providers directly into the IDI, and then we can analyse that. For that analysis, we need certain large scales of data so we can start to see statistical methodology, which, I acknowledge, doesn't work for smaller providers who just don't have that reach. In the short term, we're encouraging providers to start to collectivise to enable you to get that scale. But also, part of this is a learning experiment. How can we do this so we can start to get the right levels of data that we know can be measured effectively for smaller providers and working our way through that.” – Alistair