



*Me aro koe ki te hā o Hineahuone*  
“Pay heed to the dignity of women”

**Te Puawaitanga  
ki Ōtautahi Trust**

*Mō tātou ā mō ngā uri ā muri ake nei*  
“For us and for those who will come after us”

## MEDIA RELEASE

### More pressure needed for breastfeeding success

This World Breastfeeding Week the urgent call is for all sectors to remove barriers to breastfeeding. Despite the fact that almost all babies are breastfed at birth, families face too many barriers to continue with their intentions, with only 17% of infants being exclusively breastfed at six months, the Ministry of Health and World Health Organisation recommendation.

“Whānau have a right to be supported in how they nourish their babies, and they want to breastfeed,” said Kelly Dorgan, Health Justice Advocate with the Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service, a public health contract situated at Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust. “Our low rates are an alarm bell demonstrating that as a society, we are failing whānau at one of the most vulnerable times of their lives.”

The first week of August is World Breastfeeding Week, an initiative of the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. This year’s theme ‘Step Up for Breastfeeding - educate and support’ puts pressure on all sectors and the organisations within them to take responsibility for creating environments that protect this precious taonga.

The Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service is celebrating World Breastfeeding Week with Kōrero Whāngai Ū, a photography exhibition showcasing local breastfeeding journeys to communicate the importance, the beauty, and the challenges of nurturing babies. The exhibit is a collaboration with local family photographer Liane Helena and is about showing the lived experience – in its truest forms. The exhibition is being hosted by Christchurch City Council Libraries.

“Breastfeeding is most likely to happen in societies in which it is supported and protected,” said Dorgan. “All of us play a part in nurturing whānau with new pēpi by providing environments in which all members of our communities can thrive.”

Successive governments have all acknowledged breastfeeding as an important health determinant with lasting impact on the ongoing wellbeing of babies, mothers, families, and communities, setting unmet targets year after year. However, when not effectively supported and protected, whānau efforts to breastfeed can result in significant mental distress, with feelings of guilt and shame reported by those who don’t ‘succeed.’

By recommending breastfeeding without addressing the structural barriers that exist across society, we are creating unjust pressure that causes harm. This harm is greatest for those populations already facing significant systemic disadvantage, such as the highly deprived, young parents, Māori, and Pasifika.



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In 2020, the Ministry of Health published the [National Breastfeeding Strategy](#) that identifies the need for changes across sectors to improve breastfeeding rates and experiences. “I look forward to the Strategy’s full implementation.” However, Dorgan worries until then whānau are at an increased risk of missing out on breastfeeding’s important physical, relational, emotional, and environmental impacts.

“Breastfeeding is a huge contribution to our communities,” said Dorgan. “We can’t expect individuals to bear the burden alone. In our various roles in society as decision makers, we must all urgently act to protect this practice.”

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#### **ABOUT**

**Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust** is a kaupapa Māori community trust providing a range of high impact health, education, social and community services. Established by the Ōtautahi Branch of the Māori Women’s Welfare League, our services support whānau across the different stages of life. Our vision is of safe, healthy and connected whānau securing positive futures for all generations. We are guided by our whakatauki:

- Mō tātou, ā, mō ngā uri ā muri ake nei – *For us and for those who will come after us.*
- Me aro koe ki te hā o Hineahuone – *Pay heed to the dignity of women.*



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