

Whānau Āwhina Plunket pays tribute to retiring chief nurse Jane O’Malley

Whānau Āwhina Plunket is paying tribute to outgoing chief nurse Jane O’Malley and says her nursing leadership has been nationally significant to the health sector.

Chief Executive Amanda Malu says Jane O’Malley is highly respected within Whānau Āwhina Plunket and across the sector for her diverse nursing experience and strategic focus.

Since starting her role at the organisation in 2018, Dr O’Malley has been responsible for nursing services to more than 500,000 Kiwi families each year, which is around 2,100 tamariki and pēpē a day.

“I can’t imagine a bigger role that is responsible for overseeing our frontline kaimahi, who see more than 89% of all newborn pēpē in New Zealand,” says Mrs Malu.

“Of particular significance to our organisation is the leadership and knowledge Jane has shown on our pro-equity journey. We have committed to working better with iwi providers and whānau Māori to ensure all of our services meet their needs by 2025,” she says.

Before joining Whānau Āwhina Plunket, Jane O’Malley was Chief Nursing Officer at the Ministry of Health. She has also been Director of Nursing and Midwifery for the West Coast District Health Board, a President of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation and is a former clinical nurse manager and nursing academic with a PHD in mental health.

Jane O’Malley says her areas of clinical experience are respiratory illness and mental illness. Through that she has come to understand that good health and parenting in the early years had a direct correlation on health in later life.

“The importance of a child’s early years cannot ever be underestimated. Raising healthy children is a shared responsibility, which is why I was drawn to Whānau Āwhina Plunket’s vision of setting the path to wellness in the first 1000 days.

“I’m so proud of the work we have done supporting parents, whānau and communities. Every whānau deserves a warm safe home for their tamariki, food to eat and freedom from anxiety. This is what our team helps with on a practical level and through advocacy,” she says.

Dr O’Malley wants to pay tribute to the hard work of kaimahi, or frontline workers, especially in the last two years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our kaimahi are the glue in many of our communities. Their partnership supporting whānau during the pandemic has been outstanding, working in difficult situations.”

Dr O’Malley says the one thing she wants all parents to know is that theirs is one of the most important roles on earth.

“As a grandmother to five boys, my life has really come full circle as I’m now watching my own three children going through all the issues we deal with every day at Whānau Āwhina Plunket.

“Sleepless nights, questions about vaccinations and what babies should be eating – I’m suddenly immersed back in parenting! I am looking forward to spending more time with my mokopuna in my retirement,” she says.

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