



Merger between Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki Kindergartens

Introduction

This booklet is designed to help you understand the journey that Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki have been on over the last 12–18 months. It outlines the key findings from our due diligence programme, including how our values align, how our systems compare, and what a merged organisation could offer.

Most importantly, it's about keeping you informed. As a parent or caregiver, you are a member of your local kindergarten association. That means you have a voice and a vote in what happens next. We want you to feel confident that this proposal has been carefully considered, and that it's grounded in a genuine commitment to what's best for tamariki and whānau.

This is a moment of opportunity. By coming together, we believe we can create a stronger, more resilient, and more responsive kindergarten movement in Taranaki, one that honours our past, reflects our present, and prepares us for the future.

How did we get to here?

Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki are two long-established not for profit Kindergarten Associations focused on providing high quality early childhood education. Both associations are also members of Kindergartens Aotearoa, a collective group of Associations with a shared commitment to safeguarding the future of Kindergarten as a community-focused, accessible and affordable Early Childhood Education offering.

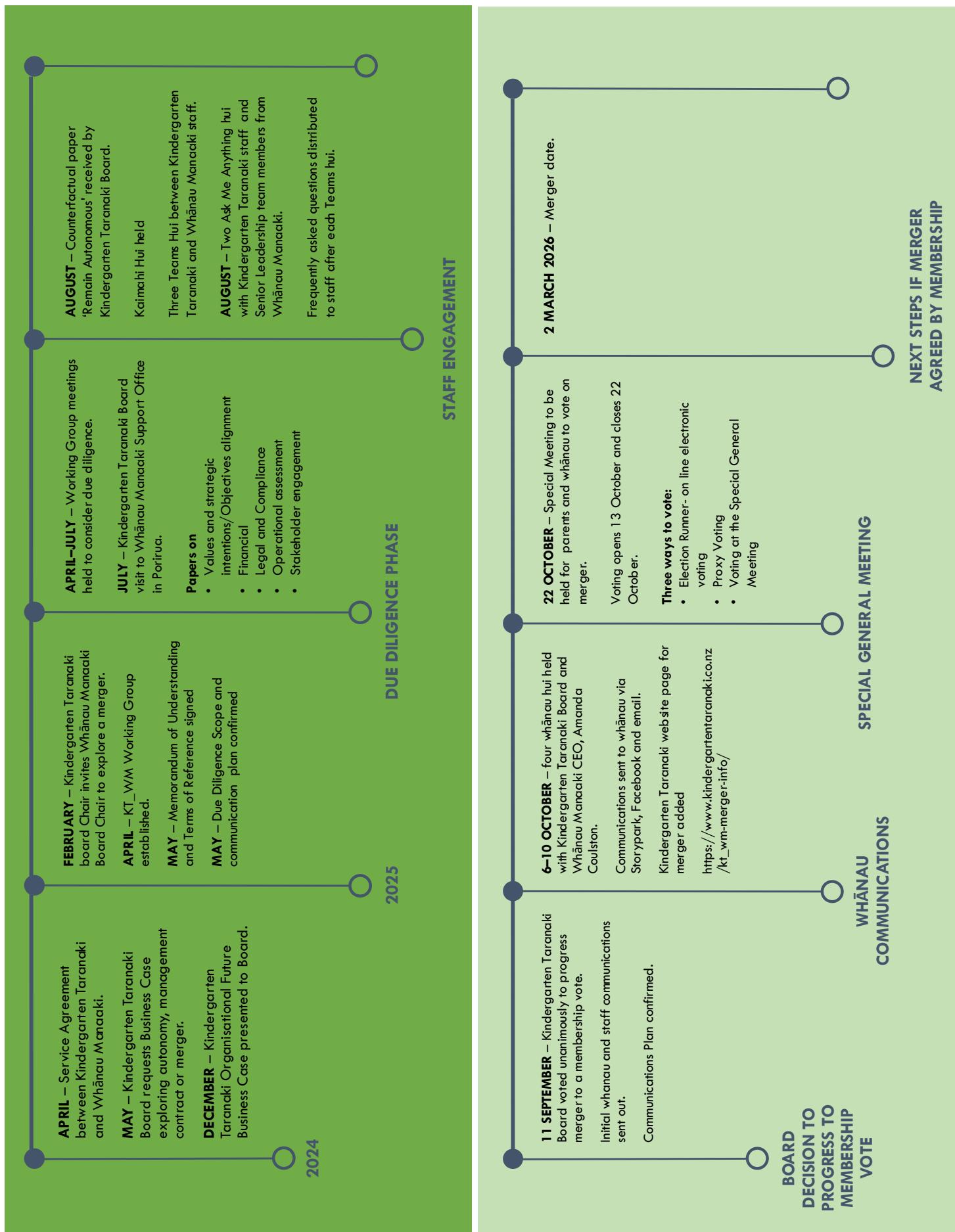
Over the past four years, Kindergarten Taranaki has been investigating options for the best possible pathways to continue to deliver high quality early childhood education into the future.

In 2023, Whānau Manaaki and Kindergarten Taranaki established a more formal relationship in the form of a service agreement to support the development of systems and processes to strengthen financial and organisational health.

Kindergarten Taranaki has considered a number of options, from remaining autonomous, expanding the services we offer, partnering with existing organisations, through to merging with different types of organisations over this time. Consequently, the options of remaining autonomous and merging with Whānau Manaaki were taken through to a detailed assessment.



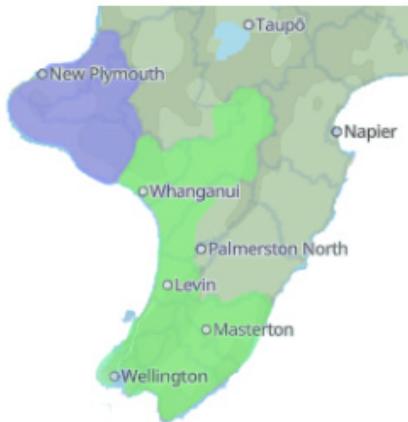
Timeline to Merger



Ko wai tatou?

Kindergarten Taranaki

- Kindergarten Taranaki has been in the Taranaki region for over 70-years
- 24 Kindergartens from Pātea to Waitara to Ōakura
- Approximately 1,300 tamariki attending
- 150 teaching staff and 45 non-teaching staff
- One support office in New Plymouth



Whānau Manaaki

- Whānau Manaaki has been an established association for 120 years
- 112 services (111 kindergartens and 1 Pacific Home-based service) in South and West Otago, then from Seatoun through to Northern Manawatu, Wairarapa, Whanganui, and the Central Plateau
- Approximately 5,200 tamariki attending
- Over 850 teaching staff and 250 non-teaching staff
- Support offices in Porirua, Levin, Whanganui and Balclutha



The Due Diligence Process

The due diligence process was a collaborative effort between Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki and was overseen by a Working Group made up of Board Members and Senior Leadership of both organisations.

The due diligence was undertaken to assess the possibility of a merger of our two organisations. The scope of this assessment was focussed on whether a merger would deliver better outcomes for our tamariki, teachers and community than remaining autonomous.

The key areas investigated in detail through this process were:

- Strategic alignment and compatibility
- Governance compatibility
- General assurance, financial sustainability and budgeting processes
- Operational assessment and alignment, and
- Considering the perspectives of teachers and support office staff



Why Merging with Whānau Manaaki Offers a Better Path

Strategic Context

Kindergarten Taranaki faces mounting financial, operational, and policy pressures that threaten its long-term sustainability. While autonomy preserves local identity, the current model is not viable without transformational investment and significant risk.

Key Challenges of Remaining Autonomous

- **Financial Deficits:** To implement the strategies and plans we have to excel as Kindergarten Taranaki, we would be looking at a forecasted operating deficit of \$235,000 in 2025/26, with annual funding shortfalls of \$200,000–\$700,000 depending on what we were able to deliver.
- **Limited Revenue Growth:** Fee increases required to fund strategy (up to \$8–9/hour) are unaffordable for many whānau, especially in equity-funded kindergartens. Lower fees are necessary regardless, but would only maintain the status quo.
- **Operational Strain:** Head office is stretched; delivering an aspirational strategy requires \$550,000/year in capability uplift and new leadership roles (COO, CFO).
- **Outdated Systems:** Digital infrastructure upgrades alone cost \$615,000 upfront, with \$140,000 ongoing—unaffordable without external support.
- **Policy Risks:** Government reforms threaten funding, cultural obligations, and teacher pay parity. Reclassification to non-kindergarten funding rates could cut revenue by \$2.7 million/year.

Why Whānau Manaaki Offers a Better Path

- **Shared Investment:** Whānau Manaaki has already invested in systems, infrastructure, and digital capability. Kindergarten Taranaki would benefit from shared costs and established platforms.
- **Strategic Capability:** Access to experienced leadership, data-driven decision-making, and robust governance structures.
- **Workforce Support:** Strong PLD programmes, graduate pipelines, and staffing resilience.
- **Cultural Integrity:** Continued commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and culturally responsive education. In addition, Whānau Manaaki have an established reputation for ensuring local identity is promoted.
- **Economies of Scale:** Centralised services reduce overheads and potentially unlocks savings of \$175,000–\$350,000/year across the network.
- **Futureproofing:** Enhanced ability to adapt to regulatory changes, maintain service quality, and expand offerings sustainably.

Conclusion

Remaining autonomous may be feasible short-term but is not a credible long-term strategy. Merging with Whānau Manaaki offers financial stability, strategic capability, and cultural alignment—ensuring tamariki and whānau continue to receive high-quality, equitable early childhood education in Taranaki.

Why has the Board voted to progress the merger to a membership vote?

Our Board has seen compelling evidence through the due diligence activities, that a merger with Whānau Manaaki would realise significant benefits. Consequently, the board voted unanimously to progress the merger to a membership vote. The benefits we believe can be achieved include:

- Better outcomes for tamariki
- Better outcomes for staff
- Long term financial security
- A stronger organisation with the ability for kindergartens to maintain their special character and relationships with communities
- The ability for our strategic aspirations to be delivered, in particular cultural capability

Rationale for the merger

The proposed merger between Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki is about creating a stronger, more resilient organisation that can better respond to the diverse and changing needs of our communities. By combining resources, expertise, and infrastructure, we can improve service delivery and ensure every child in Taranaki has access to high-quality kindergarten education. This is about strengthening centralised support and local provision, with kindergartens remaining deeply connected to their communities. Ultimately, the merger is a step toward securing better outcomes for tamariki and whānau, now and into the future.

Bringing Our Strengths Together

One of the clearest findings from the due diligence process is that Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki are already highly compatible in how they operate — and that merging would bring real, tangible benefits for tamariki, whānau, and staff. In particular, both organisations:

- Share a deep commitment to high quality education.
- Have an emphasis on holistic child development.
- Have a strong focus on community engagement.
- Are committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Whānau Manaaki has committed to continued development of Kindergarten in Taranaki, with particular regard to developing cultural competency, and ensuring appropriate investment being made in the region.

Operationally, both organisations are committed to high standards and continuous improvement. Whānau Manaaki brings a suite of well-established frameworks — from digital governance and learning support to workforce planning and evaluation — that would strengthen and support the work already happening in Taranaki. Kindergarten Taranaki brings deep local knowledge and strong community relationships. Together, these strengths would create a more resilient and responsive organisation.

Systems-wise, there's already strong alignment. A merger would allow for streamlined processes, shared tools, and better support for kaiako and administrators.

In terms of compliance and risk, both organisations meet all Ministry of Education requirements and have strong health and safety systems. ERO reports confirm that both are delivering quality education. Whānau Manaaki's more mature compliance systems would provide added assurance and support.

Financially, both organisations are stable, with unqualified audit reports and positive cashflow. A merged organisation would benefit from economies of scale, greater resilience to funding changes, and the ability to invest in innovation and growth.

Finally, stakeholder engagement has shown cautious optimism and strong interest.



Benefits for Staff

- Greater professional development opportunities
- Sharing of best practice
- Increased job security and growth potential
- Simplified and more efficient administrative processes
- Increased access to support office team members
- Access to in-house learning support network
- Systems and processes that can support teaching and learning
- Access to a broader range of support office functions and people

Benefits for Tamariki

- Greater access to high quality early childhood education
- Wider range of learning resources and environments
- Cultural diversity and inclusion
- Localised curriculum and identity prioritised

Benefits for Whānau

- Enhanced whānau support services
- Increased communication and involvement opportunities
- Establishment of a local Kaitiaki Group to consider developments in the Taranaki region, in addition to two (2) positions on the Whānau Manaaki Board
- Potentially increasing the number and types of services available in Taranaki

Strategic Advantages

- A stronger unified voice in advocating for early childhood education, locally, regionally and nationally
- Ability to give effect to strategy
- Ability to progress a more comprehensive capital investment programme
- Improved financial stability
- Shared values

Will there be any noticeable changes on 2 March 2026?

No, if the merger proceeds, tamariki and whānau will not see a lot of change on 2 March 2026. The teaching and support staff at each kindergarten will remain the same.

There will be some changes to the policy and procedures that you will see displayed and over time signage will change from Kindergarten Taranaki to Whānau Manaaki signage

The Resolution for the Special General Meeting 22 October:

Legal advice has been sought from a lawyer that specialises in constitutions and Incorporated Society rules. Their advice has been used to ensure the resolutions cover all the necessary elements for a safe and constitutional merger.

Members are being asked to vote on the following resolution, to enable a merger between Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki.

The Association's members hereby resolve:

- That He Whānau Manaaki o Tararua Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated satisfies the requirements of an "organisation of a charitable nature having similar objects to Kindergarten Taranaki and operating within New Zealand."
- To authorise the Association's Board to enter into all necessary documentation to transfer all assets, liabilities, supply contracts and funding arrangements to He Whānau Manaaki o Tararua Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated, with effect from 02 March 2026.
- To wind up Kindergarten Taranaki provided that the winding up and dissolution of the Association shall take place no sooner than 02 March 2026.

If the resolution is passed, Kindergarten Taranaki and Whānau Manaaki will work together to transition Kindergarten Taranaki into Whānau Manaaki. This will include transition plans for:

- Staff employment
- Legal transactions
- Operational functions
- Financial changes
- Teaching and Learning relationships

