

Youth plan given a ministerial nod

TE KUITI'S ground-breaking Youth Action Plan has received national recognition from Social Development Minister Paula Bennett.

Not only has Ms Bennett pledged continued support for the social sector trial, she heaped praise on its governance group saying: "Te Kuiti's youth is in good hands".

The minister, also responsible for Youth Affairs and Employment, visited Te Kuiti on Tuesday to discuss social issues with representatives from local groups including Te Kuiti Hospital, Wintec, Police, Waitomo District Council and youth services.

The breakfast at Panorama Motor Inn gave Ms Bennett an opportunity to outline the Government's future plans around social sector trials and in particular Te Kuiti's Youth Action Plan.

"I can tell you there will not be a 'Paula Bennett' programme rolled out around the nation," she said.

"What you will see is more autonomy for each area in how they manage their own resources and their own abilities to know what works best because the answers to our challenges and problems on the ground lie within the communities themselves."

She said the Government is not scaling

back its own social responsibilities by letting communities take control instead action plan results have been so positive, plans are underway to expand social sector trials in more towns around the country.

In 2011, Te Kuiti, Kawerau, Tokoroa, Taumarunui, Levin and Gore were selected to trial a new approach to social service delivery called 'action plans' which are designed and governed by local people.

"After seeing the success of Te Kuiti's social sector trials, I can honestly say the youth here are in very good hands," said Ms Bennett.

"Te Kuiti people have a great can-do attitude and it shows in the action plan's results which as minister for social development and youth affairs is heartening to see."

Since its launch in October 2011, the Te Kuiti Youth Action Plan has resulted in decreased truancy and youth offending and increased youth employment.

Te Kuiti Social Sector youth services manager Hilary Karaitiana spoke at the breakfast on behalf of the governance group.

"In our community we do have the skills and knowledge to be able to make positive decisions provided the mandated support we get from Wellington is there.



PEOPLE POWER: Waitomo Youth Council member Ruby Lindstrom (left) Te Kuiti Social Sector youth services manager Hilary Karaitiana, Minister Paula Bennett and Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna are working together to improve the lives of young people in Te Kuiti.

"I strongly agree with the view that communities have the answers and we know what our young people need. We still have a long way to go but early results like increased school attendance and reduced truancy give us the motivation to know that we are on the right track."

ENGAGING SPEAKER

Mayor Brian Hanna says meeting with Ms Bennett was extremely worthwhile.

"It's always exciting when we have a cabinet minister in town and her presentation on social sector trials was very positive.

"She was obviously very pleased with some of the results coming from our youth action plan and it was great that we had something positive to present to her in return.

"She is a very engaging speaker and completely open to helping us in any way that she can."



HELPING HAND: Prescott Toyota company director Ryan Prescott has loaned the Perawiti family a vehicle, while daughter 11-year-old Shadanae fights bone cancer.

A helping hand

PRESCOTT Toyota has made a long, hard journey an easier one for the Perawiti family.

Eleven-year-old Shadanae Perawiti is battling bone cancer and travels from Otorohanga to Auckland's Starship Hospital for chemotherapy treatment.

After hearing about Shadanae's plight, company director Ryan Prescott has gifted the family a Toyota Previa . . . on loan indefinitely.

"Otorohanga is really supportive of our company. This is a great way we can help

out a family who needs it."

The family picked up their new vehicle on Friday. Mum Rosalie was overwhelmed by the generous gesture.

"Thumbs up and a huge thank you to Ryan and his company for lending my family a vehicle," she says.

"You make a long, hard journey an easy one. And to the community - your support, kindness, generosity and caring words are overwhelming - there are no words to show our gratitude, but from the bottom of our hearts . . . the biggest thank you."

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