

# Homework centre getting results

*Pictures by Tim Koller*

**By Charlton Clark**

**W**aahi Marae's homework centre has produced its first pupil to be accredited University Entrance.

And Joyce Maipi reckons there was "no way" she would have been accredited without the benefits of the centre.

For the last few weeks of 1983 a group of Huntly College pupils lived at the marae while they studied for School Certificate and University Entrance examinations.

"We haven't been home for a while," one of them joked — they even stayed there at weekends.

Teachers, parents and even a former pupil would come down and help out, both with the pupils' study and with things like preparing meals and refreshments.

When she became free from having to study for exams, Miss Maipi continued to stay at the marae, helping the other pupils with their study and cooking meals for them.

During the day, the pupils studied at desks set up in the meeting house. In the evening, they would move over to the marae's koriri centre after the workers there finished for the day.

And all of them are adamant their academic careers are improving with the chance to study away from the distractions of home, and with the help and encouragement from their teachers.

All the pupils who used the homework centre in 1982 gained at least one pass in School Certificate, they said — a result they would not have achieved otherwise.

And they were looking for similar or better results last year.

All but one of the regular attenders were Maori, and the establishment of the centre arose from the realisation that 80 per cent of local Maori children were leaving school with "no qualifications whatever," said Waahi recreation and welfare officer Rick Maipi, Joyce's uncle.

"It grew from an awareness that something needed to be done to encourage the kids to get School Certificate, because when they come out with nothing they find it that much harder to get employment," he said.

At first pupils from the college were invited to study and do their homework in a flat on the marae being used by a visiting American professor, Corinne Wood, who was doing research into Maori health there.

Gradually parents, teachers and marae leaders became aware that the pupils' schoolwork was improving and they were adopting more positive attitudes to their work.

Teachers and parents began going to the marae to help the pupils until now, two years later, the centre is well established.

"The results are really showing up now in their work," Mr Maipi said.

"It's easier here because there are no distractions here," one girl said.

"A lot of us come from families with little brothers and sisters running around, and there was a lack of encouragement from parents for them to study," Joyce said. "So it was decided to live in here."

Huntly College principal Jack Hughes doesn't blame the parents, though.

"Many of the parents themselves know that their own educational qualifications are somewhat limited and feel a little embarrassed, or even fearful, to offer advice in academic matters that are beyond their experience," Mr Hughes said.

"Many of them did not get as far as external examinations, and did not even get the chance, so you can understand their reluctance, but they all want the best for their children."

"But because of their lack of experience they can not provide the appropriate support. So the kids lean on

each other and other people who have had the experience."

He agreed with the pupils that conditions at home were often unsuitable for studying for examinations.

"Often you have Dad, Mum and four or five kids and only three bedrooms in a small house. Dad and Mum both go out to work, and keeping their heads above water is their priority."

But thanks to the centre, the pupils were "beginning to come to grips with this motivation thing", Mr Hughes said. The pupils had gained an idea of where they were heading in their studies, and had therefore become more interested in them.

They had gained academically, in their attitudes to study, in their attitudes towards other people, and in their knowledge of themselves, he said.

"I hope it continues." Judging by the pupils' enthusiasm, it should do so, and expand as well.

The area we have to look at now is the third and fourth formers," Mr Maipi said. "Certainly for young Maoris there is a problem there. With the summer holidays coming up they start getting into trouble. In that period they need encouragement to go on to the higher levels of education."

One or two third and fourth formers were attending the centre last year, and finding it useful, and the parents of children coming up to their School Cer-



Joyce Maipi gives Darby Kaweroa a hand with his study, while Deanna Kaa (back) and Shelley Sanerive get on with their work.