

Extra support for Kohanga Reo

A substantial increase in funding to \$9.219 million has been given for the Kohanga Reo Whanau Centres.

The amount spent on Kohanga Reo in the last financial year was \$2.506 million.

Maori Affairs minister Mr Wetere said that the funding was in the estimates of the Department of Maori Affairs, and was proof of the Government's support for the Maori surge in pre-school education.

"The preservation of the Maori language is a primary objective of this Labour Government, and we are all well aware of the importance for the growth of both language and culture within a society that is becoming increasingly multi-cultural.

"The new increase will help clear away the uncertainty that had arisen by the decision to withdraw previous labour funding programmes which Kohanga Reo had used as part of its employment of trainees," said Mr Wetere.

"In 1981 at the kaumatua conference in Wellington it was strongly recommended that a Maori pre-school movement be started for Maori children, where the Maori language and culture would be a normal way of life and of instruction.

"\$45,000 was therefore given in 1982 to set up five centres, and the first one was the Pukeatua centre at Wai-nuiomata, Wellington.

"The Maori people, however, refused to wait to see how the first five centres would operate, and in twelve months established 82 centres around New Zealand.

"In 1983 a grant of \$500,000 was made, and a further \$520,000 in 1984/85.

"In the last financial year an amount of \$2.5 million came from the Maori Affairs Vote for the Kohanga Reo.

"This has now been increased for this

year to 9.219 million.

"Today there are 460 Kohanga Reo centres, and 50 waiting to be set up.

"There are 8,500 children attending, and 1,300 kaumatua who help with the language and culture.

"The Minister of Education, last December held an early childhood care and education forum, which formally acknowledged the place of kohanga reo, as an integral part of our education system.

"The forum also saw the potential that the Kohanga Reo system could help give all New Zealanders a means to develop a New Zealand identity that is distinctively our own.

"Te Kohanga Reo has pioneered the way in New Zealand of developing a bilingual nation, where people can speak two languages — English and Maori.

"But it is the concept of developing strong, caring, family or whanau support systems, which is its greatest contribution.

"One of the more valuable side effects now, is that there are definite signs of Maori parents becoming more involved in education past the pre-school level, which can only lead to a better deal for our children," said Mr Wetere.

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