

# *The origins of this taonga – this treasure*

## *Kaiāwhina*

Inā mōhiotia te mana o te kupu, kua mārama mai te mana o tēnei taonga, te Kaiāwhina  
*When we acknowledge the mana of the word, we understand the mana of Kaiāwhina*

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The term 'Kaiāwhina' is a taonga – a term that embodies the core essence and nature of a workforce that is passionate, resilient, diverse, skilled and committed to supporting hauora (holistic wellbeing) outcomes of all in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This taonga carries a whakapapa – origins that stem from a desire to create a term to replace demeaning labels such as the 'non-regulated' or 'unregulated' workforce, and to recognise the mana and value that Kaiāwhina hold in the health and disability sectors.

This taonga aligns with the shared nature of the diverse workforce as highly skilled practitioners of āwhina – supporting and assisting tāngata through aroha (compassion and empathy). This distinctive role is captured within te reo Māori to reflect the ngako, the deeper meaning of the term:

*Kai* person performing a role      *Āwhina* to support and assist

*He mana tō te kupu* – words hold great power and have the ability to either enhance or diminish mana and the wairua of a person.

Kaumātua Wikepa Keelan (Ngāti Porou/Ngāti Kahungunu/Rongomaiwahine) who held the role of Chief Advisor Māori – Ministry of Health 2014, championed the taonga for this workforce. Kaiāwhina encompasses, yet still respects, the individual mana of each of the diverse and varying roles within this workforce<sup>1</sup>.

The Kaiāwhina workforce can navigate across te ao Māori (the Māori world) and te ao Tauīwi (the non-Māori world) to understand the hauora of a tangata (person). This bi-cultural ethos inherent in Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledges a person's individual sense of belonging, identity and connection to wairua (the spiritual), hinengaro (psychological), tinana (physical), and whānau (social connections) as interwoven elements to encompass collective and relational hauora (wellbeing). For Māori, hauora is not only wellbeing but the living breath – life essence of a person. People who hold the title of Kaiāwhina take a shared responsibility to ensure the hauora of a person maintains its vitality; its life essence.

Kaiāwhina represent all people within the health and disability sectors who support tāngata (people) to live well, embrace and exercise tino-rangatiratanga (self-determination) in navigating their own journey to pae ora, a healthy future.

The moemoeā (vision and dream) of the taonga is to enhance mana and evoke a sense of tino-rangatiratanga for all Kaiāwhina in Aotearoa New Zealand.

*"The taonga Kaiāwhina supports the movement towards whānau ora and recognises the importance that Kaiāwhina play in our whānau and communities"*

— Kaumātua Wikepa Keelan

<sup>1</sup> The term Kaiāwhina does not replace specific job titles (e.g. support worker, healthcare assistant, aged care worker, orderly, mental health support worker, diversional therapist etc.). Nor does it change the role title of Kaiāwhina for those who hold it.