

Me kōrero

Let's Talk

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SUMMER 2025-26

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Home in Time for Christmas

Aviva moved into our new space at Amuri Park and opened to clients in early November

In July 2025, Aviva embarked on a new chapter: a move to our next “forever” home. Our base at The Loft supported our mahi for over nine years. During that time, our services expanded significantly, and staff numbers nearly doubled. It was time for a new space that fit the future of our mahi. The journey towards being settled in our space took a little longer than anticipated, but it was worth the wait.

It was hard to say goodbye to The Loft. As founding partners, we have witnessed its growth and development and seen how it has become a vital local service, community hub, place of safety and a thriving workplace. While Aviva now operates from a new space, we continue to partner with the Loft’s Social Emergency Response Service, to ensure the best outcomes for our whai ora.

Our lease at The Loft ended in June, but our new space wasn’t quite ready yet. In a move reminiscent of 2020, our kaimahi moved to remote work and continued to support whai ora, as we worked to prepare the space.

We originally planned to move in August, but this was pushed back to early November. Although there were some consenting delays along the way, the main reason for the longer timeframe was to ensure the new premises were truly fit for purpose. Now we are in, it’s clear that the extra time and care taken will benefit the people we serve for many years to come.

Our new building was fully refurbished and customised to allow us to deliver support in a way that is safe, dignified and responsive. A welcoming, secure,

and easy-to-navigate space is essential for reducing barriers to access, especially for those in crisis, and disabled, neurodiverse, or otherwise marginalised people. All groups that experience higher rates of violence than the average population.

“When I made contact with Aviva, I was so nervous as my self-confidence was zero. I remember going to the offices and tripping up the stairs with nerves. I nearly burst into tears before I got to reception I saw this lovely lady. She was comforting and made me feel like a person... which started to give me hope that there are good people out there wanting to help.”

– Maria, Aviva whai ora

Clinical environments can feel intimidating or unsafe; our vision is for a calm and reassuring space that fosters healing and connection. Comfortable, child-friendly furnishings help reduce anxiety, build trust, and support meaningful engagement.

A non-clinical setting signals safety, making it easier for tamariki and rangatahi to open up and connect.

Our new home features a whānau space that will be used by adults accessing family violence support who have children with them, and for directly engaging 1:1 with children and young people.

A larger meeting space will be used to deliver our life-changing family violence education programmes – Courageous Steps, Tamariki RISE, Seuga, and Aoraki Rōpū. It is also ideal for hosting sector hui and could be available for others when not in use for our education programmes. While we are no longer at The Loft, we continue to value its principles of partnership, inclusivity and community.

Our new premises are full of natural light, have access to



green space, and provide quiet and private areas for our kaimahi to help them function at their best.

Te Ao Māori and Pasifika influences are included in design, signage, and naming of spaces.

We are so grateful for all the community support we've received for this endeavour, from local government and Members of Parliament, partner organisations

like Te Whare Hauora, SHINE, and START, and community advocacy groups such as She Is Not Your Rehab, funders such as Kelliher Charitable Trust, Kiwi Gaming Trust, Lion Foundation, DIA Lottery Grants Board. But most of all the whai ora and kaimahi, who have been so patient and understanding during this process.

Haere mai. Welcome everyone.

Our Last Christmas with Carol

When Carol announced her retirement earlier this year, at first everyone at Aviva said "yeah right!" Carol had been hinting at retirement for so long, nobody believed she would ever really leave us. And nobody wanted her to. In her 17 years at Aviva, Carol has supported thousands of whānau to become safe, helping them through trauma, grief, shame and uncertainty and restoring their sense of value, dignity and hope.

What first inspired Carol into this work was her own experience of violence. She had support to leave her first marriage and swore that she would help other women to become safe once she got herself sorted out.

"A really big thing – and I experienced it myself – is the 'why doesn't she just leave?' attitude. People have no understanding of the absolute pressure – trying to manage an abusive partner's behaviour, manage children and their behaviour which may be affected by what is happening around them, perhaps being the breadwinner for the family. How does she get the time or energy to leave?"

Carol made good on her promise – first as a volunteer in the sector, then as a support worker and – finally – as a qualified Social Worker. Family violence mahi can be demanding and stressful, but Carol wouldn't change her career for the world.

"I see women coming into group* so laden with shame, guilt and stress, not knowing which way to turn. By the end of the programme the changes are amazing – some of these women are barely recognisable... They realise the behaviours of their abusive partner are not about them (the women) or their fault."

When it comes to children, the work is much harder Carol says, but just as rewarding. "It's about developing a good rapport and creating a safe environment to talk about what is happening. It's about building safety all around them, so that they know that someone is going to listen and believe them."

Carol may be leaving us for the wonderful retirement she so deserves, but her legacy will continue. In her time at Aviva, Carol has given awhi to countless



young Social Workers, many of them students or recently qualified. As one of them – Alex – puts it,

"Carol is a living legend. She is always providing amazing life lessons with her stories to everyone around... Her power is in this authenticity, and I have seen the impact this has with whai ora first hand. Whai ora trust Carol and value her opinion. They feel more confident knowing Carol has got their backs. She is what I (and many others) aspire to be in our practice. She has never been above asking for help either! Especially when her keys grow legs and walk away, or the computer has eaten her document..."

Farewell Carol. Don't be a stranger – we miss you already.

* Courageous Steps, Aviva's 10-week family violence education programme.



Manipulating Mind Games

Ashley's* Story

The first time I experienced family violence, it was physical. And loud! I was six weeks pregnant and terrified. I knew things would only get worse, so I got out.

Without much support, I leant on someone I thought I could trust – Chris, an old high school friend.

Chris and I had been good friends since our early teens. He'd been there for me when I was sexually assaulted at age fourteen. When my self-esteem was in tatters, Chris had been there to help me pick up the pieces. Now, ten years on, he was still there, wanting to take care of me and the baby that was on its way. He was well-educated and had a good job – the exact opposite of my previous

partners. We married, and before long, we had three other children.

Once we were married, Chris told my mother I was his responsibility now and she should butt out. He went out of his way to create conflict with her and then cut her out of our lives.

He took full control of the finances, and because I was bringing a child into the relationship, I felt I couldn't really say anything.

Chris kept a close track of my whereabouts. He came across as caring and concerned about my safety, saying he was trying to protect me, but he didn't want me to go out alone or to spend time with my friends without him.

“Intuitively, I knew things were far from right, but I was confused.”

I noticed he was drinking large quantities of alcohol. I'd find vodka bottles stashed in cupboards and in the recycling. Outwardly, he was high functioning in his job, but the amount of alcohol he was consuming never let up.



“It’s taken a lot of work to stay strong, but with Aviva’s support, plus counselling and friends who’ve been through this too, I’m in a better place now.”

Chris threatened suicide and begged me to return. He told our small rural community that I’d left him because I couldn’t cope, that I was unstable. He twisted things around to get their sympathy and support, saying I didn’t care for the children. He made it look like he was the good dad and that it was me who was screwing things up.

He also began sharing inappropriately with our primary-aged children, using them like therapists. He told them I didn’t care about them, that I didn’t want them, and he burdened them with our financial worries. Our son Kayle began acting out aggressively, physically and verbally directing his anger onto me. Chris blamed Kayle’s negative behaviour on me. He said if I just came back, it would all stop.

He’d tell everyone he was still ‘in love’ with me. But that’s not what love looks like – I know that now.

It’s taken a lot of work to stay strong, but with Aviva’s support, plus counselling and friends who’ve been through this too, I’m in a better place now.

The kids did the Tamariki Programme, which helped them understand what they’re going through. They told me, “Our friends just don’t get it, but when we’re there, we know they do.” I’m proud they can recognise unhealthy behaviour - even when it’s coming from a parent. I’m often surprised by just how on to it they are!

My hope for the future is to simply be happy in the now. I don’t need a man to validate me. I can create a life for myself and my kids. We enjoy biking, hiking, paddleboarding and walking the dog. I just want them to have something of the childhood they deserve. My biggest hope is that they’ll know the unconditional love I have for them and that I’m always here for them.

When our daughter was just a few weeks old, I discovered that Chris was seeing sex workers. He denied it and said I was making it up. That I was unwell. In time, it happened again - but instead of denying it, he diverted the blame onto me, saying the assault in my teens had left me unable to satisfy him.

Intuitively, I knew things were far from right, but I was confused. Chris wasn’t physically abusive; he didn’t even raise his voice, but under the radar, he isolated me from others and made me second-guess my grip on reality. I was losing myself.

I wanted him to leave, but he refused, so when he was on a work trip, I gathered up the children, and we left.

* Names have been changed for privacy and safety



2025

39

2024: 54

Whānau Resilience
Long term support for
whānau to overcome
enduring effects of
family violence

The Year in Review

Working in this sector will always have challenges; organisations like ours are trebly impacted by economic downturns, legislative changes and broader societal matters. First, their effect on people and communities directly impacts our whai ora (and whai ora numbers); second it impacts on our kaimahi; finally, it can critically affect funding when we need it most.

It is widely acknowledged that family and sexual violence is a major issue in Aotearoa New Zealand. Every three minutes, Police are called to a family violence event. Last year's Crime and Victim Survey (to October 2024) identified an increase in victims of violent offending. Family violence applications in family court were the highest it has been in at least 10 years. Reports of sexual assault were up 400% since the survey began in 2018.

This is reflected in our mahi at Aviva. This year, we saw a further 7% increase in the number of clients we worked with, on top of the 30% increase from the previous year. What's more, many present with complex difficulties, dealing not only with the impacts of family and sexual violence, but also mental distress, homelessness, addiction and legal challenges.



And so, it feels almost miraculous that in 2025, Aviva enjoyed relative stability, which enabled us to continue to develop and build valuable connections locally and nationally. Our Service Managers have not only guided their teams and supported whai ora but worked within the wider sector to strengthen services for all New Zealanders.

Earlier this year we secured a contract to support users of violence through Te Huringa o Te Aō; while this kind of mahi is not new for us, we are pleased to see it being valued at a government level, and this funding will allow us to broaden our scope and impact. We also secured a contract through Oranga Tamariki, to support tamariki and rangatahi who have experienced sexual violence, through the court system. This will be delivered in collaboration with our partners at START and Te Puna Oranga. It goes without saying that this is extremely important mahi, and we have every faith in our team to offer the highest quality support and professionalism.



TOP Aviva at Rāpaki marae.

ABOVE Aviva volunteer collectors.



2025

103

2024: 70

ReachOut/Seuga
People supported
to overcome use of
violent behaviour

Aviva moves into a period of transition

In October, we said goodbye to Aviva's Co-Leader and General Manager - Corporate, Nicki O'Donnell, after nine years with the agency. Both Nicki and I stepped into co-leadership during the pandemic, helping guide service development to meet the increased demand amid the crisis. She supported the development of Aviva's Early Engagement Service, which allowed Aviva to better meet that demand, providing immediate support despite a 150% increase to our waitlist.

Nicki initially joined Aviva after a long period of innovation during which the organisation moved away from the refuge model, introducing services for sexual violence and users of violence, and the co-development of The Loft. Despite strong community support and positive feedback from pilot programmes, change can be difficult to sustain. Aviva needed a way to build financial and organisational stability. Nicki now leaves behind the strongest team we have ever had, a robust balance sheet, an organisation twice the size it was, and with contracts covering all our core services.



TOP Nicki O'Donnell, former Aviva Co-Leader and General Manager - Corporate. **BELow** Gwenda Kendrew, General Manager. **BOTTOM** Nicky (Seuga) and Tonia (OutReach).



2025

2434

2024: 2267

Total number of whai ora - tamariki, rangatahi and adults supported to overcome family violence or sexual assault

I want to recognise the important work Nicki has contributed to Aviva and thank her for her commitment and passion.

Lastly, as of November, we moved into our new premises at Amuri Park in the city centre (more on page 2).

I understand there has been a significant amount of change in recent months. Change can be unsettling, especially when it feels sudden. To our kaimahi, supporters and community, thank you for continuing to show up, even through challenging times. And to our whai ora, who show such strength, vulnerability and daring to hope, you are who inspires us.

Thank you for sticking with us through this period of change. We look forward to building a new future together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gwenda Kendrew".

Gwenda Kendrew
Aviva General Manager



Support Families this Christmas

Ensure that a family working to overcome violence has presents to open on Christmas morning.

Drop off your unwrapped gifts to the Aviva Gift Room at our new premises, Unit 4, Amuri Park, 25 Churchill Street, before Friday 12th December.

If parking, please use car park spaces 63 – 66 in front of the Aviva building. Please don't park in other car park spaces.

Christmas Gift Ideas

- ✓ New children's books, games and toys
- ✓ New clothes
- ✓ Sports equipment
- ✓ Presents for tweens and older teens
- ✓ Presents for Mum, Dad or other parental figures
- ✓ Toiletries for adults (including men and teen boys)
- ✓ Accessories for adults (including men and teen boys)
- ✓ Petrol and grocery vouchers
- ✓ Warehouse, Kmart and other vouchers
- ✓ Wrapping paper and gift tags
- ✓ Chocolates and other non-alcoholic treats

Please no wrapped gifts, second-hand items, alcohol or toy weapons such as Nerf guns or water pistols.

You can also support our clients at Christmas by donating to Aviva here: aviva.org.nz/donate



Help us break the cycle

By donating to Aviva, you are helping pave the way to a violence-free future for thousands of tamariki and whānau across Canterbury.

Go to aviva.org.nz/donate or contact community@aviva.org.nz to make a contribution.

Contact Us

Keep up to date on our services, campaigns, and opportunities.

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SOCIAL

 [@AvivaNZ](https://www.facebook.com/AvivaNZ)

 [@AvivaNZ](https://www.linkedin.com/company/aviva)

 [violence.free.aotearoa](https://www.instagram.com/violence.free.aotearoa)

Thank You

We are so grateful to all the supporters below who make Aviva's work possible.

- Burnside High School
- Christchurch Aunties
- Christchurch Casino Charitable Trust
- Christchurch City Council - Community Grants
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