

Speech notes for Superintendent Wally Haumaha

NZ Youth Mentoring Network Conference

2pm, Tuesday 10 September 2013

Ellerslie Event Centre, Greenlane East, Auckland

Conference theme: Building capacity: Making connections

Speech Topic: Role of mentoring in the Youth Justice system

Duration: 40 minutes

"In his address, Supt Haumaha will discuss recent trends in reported offending by young Māori and what those trends mean for the joint iwi/Police crime and crash prevention strategy known as *The Turning of the Tide*. His speech will also touch upon the role that mentoring can play in helping to achieve the vision outlined in *The Turning of the Tide* strategy; namely, that all Māori will live full and prosperous lives, free of crime and road trauma."

I'd like to start by considering the following whakatauki - *Ka pu te ruha ka hao te rangatahi*. It reminds us that though we are the decision makers today, we will in time be replaced by the younger generation.

It is our duty to ensure we help young people develop the emotional and mental strength they need to deal with the challenges life will throw at them - this in essence is what mentoring is about.

It means listening, instead of laying down the law - and I speak as a representative of an organisation which, it's fair to say, has traditionally been better at the latter than the former.

However, in recent years Police has transformed the way it works and thinks. We don't always get it right, but when we say 'Safer Communities Together', we're serious about the 'together'. It's less 'I am the law', and more 'we are partners'.

Having set this positive tone, I'll continue with the good news. For the past few years crime has been falling, which means fewer people are becoming victims.

Along with this, as part of the transformation I mentioned, police officers are dealing with more and more offending in ways which result in fewer and fewer people getting sucked into the justice pipeline.

That's all good news, particularly for 15 to 25-year-olds who make up the majority of victims and perpetrators of crime. It's good news for Māori, who as we know are disproportionately represented among victims and offenders.

The statistics are genuinely encouraging. Between 2009 and 2012 there has been a 31 percent decrease in total youth offending rates, and between 2007 and 2011 a 10 percent decrease in the rate at which young people are re-offending. For Māori youth, offending rates fell 32 percent between 2008 and 2012.

Fewer young people in the justice system is one of Police's central aims, though we acknowledge the role of our partner agencies in this field.

Even better than the recent reduction, though we tend to think the numbers were high to start with, they pale in comparison to the numbers of youngsters who used to go through the children's courts.

So... historically and contemporaneously, things are looking up. And they will probably continue to look up for a few more years.

But - and you knew there was going to be a But - these reductions have been taking place at a time when the youth population has been in decline. At some point around 2017/18 the youth population will start to grow again, and along with it, the volume of Police apprehensions of youth – especially Māori youth.

We can either shrug and accept the inevitability of "what goes around comes around", or we can seize this window of opportunity - while overall volumes are declining - to work smarter with the young people that do come to our attention.

Reducing youth crime across the board is one of Police's five big priorities. Within that, it has long been recognised that the specific needs of Māori youth required an approach that was shaped by Māori tikanga.

We focused on joint initiatives with Iwi, tailored to Māori youth needs; we conducted research to understand the drivers of disparity in resolution for Māori youth, among other ethnicities; we sought to develop a decision-making model that ensures consistency and takes into account Māori needs.

To address the fact that Māori often offend younger we focused on early intervention by working collaboratively with community partners; we provided more flexibility for District staff to tailor interactions with schools to specifically Māori needs.

We increased the use and quality of police Alternative Actions - diversion into the likes of informal community work, counselling, reparation agreements or apologies - as a proven way of reducing Māori entry into the justice system.

This focus on Māori needs and aspirations continues to be important because, even though overall volumes are declining, the disproportionality of Māori representation in the justice system, youth and adult, persists.

It is that disproportionality that iwi and Police have agreed to address over the next six years through *The Turning of the Tide*.

The Turning of the Tide is the only strategy in the Justice sector at present that was developed with Māori from the outset, and it is the only one that has Māori-specific targets.

It doesn't offer any easy fixes, but while the more traditional approach - setting generic targets and hoping Māori will benefit - may be less risky, it is also unlikely to transform Māori criminal justice outcomes in the way that they simply must be transformed.

The vision at the heart of *The Turning of the Tide* is simple as it is ambitious - All Māori will live full and prosperous lives, free from crime and road trauma.

That's what we would hope for New Zealanders of any background, and *The Turning of the Tide* echoes and meshes with Police's national Prevention First strategy in many ways. But it is specifically and unapologetically Māori.

The Turning of the Tide story - how it came about and was developed....

The Whanau Ora element of *The Turning of the Tide* is crucial. The strategy document speaks of the futility of taking people out of their family setting to be 'fixed', then putting them back.

The Turning of the Tide seeks to make crime prevention a part of everyday life, encouraging people to talk about crime prevention in all settings - households, schools, on the marae, wherever.

It says, and I quote: "We want as many people as possible talking about why crime is wrong, who gets hurt, and what each and every one of us can do to prevent it.

"It's time to stop paying lip service to tikanga and put our cultural values into action. Until we do, the people who suffer are our children, siblings, parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles."

It's not about doing something to wayward youth to keep them out of trouble - it's about challenging the whole community to take ownership of crime prevention.

The Turning of the Tide sets meaningful targets which will allow us to measure our progress in, for example:

- Stopping young people from entering the justice pipeline in the first place, measured by a 10 percent reduction in Māori proportionality in the stats;
- Stopping those that do enter the justice system from coming back - with a 20 percent reduction in Māori proportionality in the stats;

It seeks to change behaviour rather than resort to throwing the book at vulnerable youngsters.

The aim of the justice sector is that the bulk of youth apprehensions do not end up in Court - but I acknowledge there is wide variation in Police practice. And we know that by the time many young people reach Court, their offending behaviour has become quite entrenched.

So, we need to be acting sooner and smarter. This requires us to know which Māori youth we need to work most closely with, and which community-based organisations are best placed to do that.

Directly, and indirectly, mentoring has a role to play. We know that kids who have positive mentors are:

- Less likely to become involved in drug taking and alcohol abuse, and
- Less likely to leave school early,
- More likely to have improved academic performance,
- Have better relationships with their teachers and family than their peers who are not mentored.

School is central to the development of any young person, for good or ill. Kids who are engaged at school and achieving are much less likely to ever come to Police attention.

Again, some of the statistics around schooling are encouraging, with an 11 percent reduction in the rate of stand-downs and suspensions for Māori students in decile 1 and 2 schools since 2008; and signs of improvement in achievement.

In 2001 47 percent of Māori and 63 percent of Pacific school leavers from disadvantaged schools attained at least NCEA Level 2, compared with only 25 percent of Māori and 37 percent of Pacific school leavers in 2005.

However, we're realistic that school is not necessarily the answer for all young people, and can indeed be part of the problem.

What's certain is that we - Police and Iwi - must work more effectively with youth mentoring services to make our vision a reality.

On one level, some young people may see Police and Iwi as two sides of the same coin - representatives of authority with little relevance and little to offer in the way they want to live their lives.

It's up to us to prove them wrong in that. Iwi are pursuing many excellent ways of reconnecting with their young people; Police is doing the same - in partnership with iwi, government, non-government, and community groups.

Examples of this:

- o **Genesis Youth Project** - collaboration of Police, social workers and youth workers supporting young offenders and their families in Counties Manukau West, Counties Manukau South and Auckland East with youth and social work, youth mentoring, and counselling.
- o **Turn Your Life Around (TYLA)** - established in 1996 to work with at-risk youth within local communities and steer them away from crime. Has programmes in place in Auckland. Works with families, Police, Child Youth and Family and local communities.

At this point I'll also bang the drum for LSV - Limited Service Volunteer - courses, run by Defence with the involvement of Police mentors.

These courses aren't the boot camps so beloved of right-wing commentators. They're not a punishment, but nor are they a taxpayer-funded holiday for feckless youth. They're hard work and they're designed to bring out the best in the young people who participate.

They also require the participants to communicate - with each other and with those in positions of authority, who in normal life they'd seek to avoid. Part of the attraction for us is to challenge and reshape the participants' often hostile views of Police.

Constable Viv Teremoana, of New Plymouth, a Police mentor on an LSV course earlier this year, said this: "Some have never made their beds before,

then they're washing, ironing and learning leadership skills. You see them gaining a whole lot of confidence they've been lacking.

"They talked to me about their bad experiences. I managed to get them to look at it from a Police point of view - we are protecting people and upholding the law.

"One guy in particular was quite open in his dislike - name-calling, very in-your-face trying to get a reaction. But now he's great - we had a lot of laughs. It's worth being involved to show people police officers are all individuals. It's a good preventative tool even for people who haven't broken the law."

This mentoring has benefits for the mentees, and it has benefits for Police - both as an organisation, and for the individual officers who often find the experience challenges them as it challenges the participants.

I'd also briefly like to consider the potential of police officers as mentors in the course of their day-to-day activities. One of the drivers of our current focus on recruiting members of ethnic communities is the potential for establishing positive role models for those communities.

For example, a Māori man or woman in a police uniform sends a powerful message to challenge any view of Police as part of the machinery of a remote Anglo-Saxon state. It establishes the reality of Police's relevance to the community, and that the community has a stake in Police.

It signals that person's grounding within their own culture and their confidence and competence in what we might call the official world - and this is potentially a powerful message to young people who without such an influence might find less helpful role models to follow.

Wally - any insights from your own experience around this?

We must get police officers alongside our young people, in positive and non-confrontational situations, as early and as often as possible. It might be unofficial mentoring by a brother, sister, cousin, ex-school friend or someone else from the local community who happens to be a police officer.

It might be an officer getting to know kids through Blue Light activities. It might be a Constable patiently talking through an LSV course participant's bad experiences. It might even be a dancing cop from a Neighbourhood Policing Team, busting some cool moves at a community event.

Ultimately, what we want is fewer and fewer young people coming to Police attention for the wrong reasons, and particularly Māori young people because of the disproportionately positive effect that would have on our justice landscape.

There is much work to be done to get there - but I firmly believe that together we can do it.

I think I can speak on behalf of Police and members of the Police Commissioner's Māori Focus Forum - not to mention my own iwi - when I say we will work with anyone who shares that simple, ambitious and challenging vision: For Māori to live full and prosperous lives, free of crime and road trauma.

We look forward to working with you in the years to come to make this a reality.