

# How do we know it's working?



**A community developing organisation tries to demonstrate it is making a major social impact.**

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Violence Free Waitakere (VFW) is a small New Zealand based community development organisation which for 16 years has been running events and campaigns designed to prevent violence and increase community capacity and resilience. VFW has an expenditure of nearly \$500,000 a year almost all of which comes from very short term funding sources (1 year cycles). A particular focus of the work is to produce templates of projects that would enable other communities in New Zealand to run their own variations of these projects. Creating model projects and testing them out takes much more than a year and particularly what takes the time is to show that not only do people like to engage with our

projects and take information away which they later may use, but that the ripples of the projects actually create a shift in practice in the community.

Evaluating the impact of projects on a community is a challenging and potentially expensive task for a small community organisation and this paper looks at the trajectory of three major project areas from conception to promotion into other communities. The projects areas covered are:

- **Toddler Day Out & Great Parenting Fair** and associated programmes designed to increase participation in Early Childhood Education and promote non-violent parenting;
- **Our Amazing Place - Community Treasure Hunt**, a walkabout event where people discover and celebrate the interesting people, places, activities and organisations in their community. This event has been run throughout New Zealand and in South Africa.
- **Violence Free Begins with Me** primary and intermediate school violence prevention programme which is headlined with an eight-minute animation, Jade Speaks Up, which has been sold to schools and community organisations around New Zealand;

Our evaluation processes look at participation, engagement with the messages being promoted, experience of change and the part that Violence Free Waitakere has contributed to trends measured by census data and other community demographic indicators of community status and change.

## Violence Free Waitakere – Vision and Aims

### Vision:

to innovate for violence prevention through creating community resilience

### One key aim:

to produce model projects which successfully create community resilience and other effective alternatives to violence

The value of our model projects ultimately has to be assessed by measures of community change, not just by measures of engagement – participation, satisfaction, fun

Violence Free Waitakere Constitution (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.violencefreewaitakere.org/about-us>



Toddler Day Out began their evaluation of our 2006 *Toddler Day Out; Great Parenting Fair* (TDO) stating that *Waitakere City has one of the lowest early childhood education participation rates in the Auckland Region..*

*[and} also ..New Zealand's highest figures of referrals to CYFS due to neglect and abuse, as if TDO was a model project designed to provide part of the remedy for the reduction of child abuse and increase in early childhood education in the Waitakere area.*



Figure 1: Images from the 2014 Toddler Day Out – Great Parenting Fair.

Bring together early childhood education, social and health services a 'one stop shop' where people can access these services. The event has to be culturally rich (including sections focussed on specific cultures) and great fun.



2014: 13,000 people at the Trust Stadium. 73 education, social and health services ran information and/or fun activity centres. On a stage at one end of the stadium - dance, comedy and cultural performing groups and interactive events and competitions; at the other end, an array of huge bouncy castles; and outside, safety displays, food stalls, rides and more information services





## Can an event like Toddler Day Out help produce such a change?

The direct (as opposed to the long term) purpose of TDO is to raise awareness for families with under-five year olds of the importance of group socialization, pre-literacy skills, good health and a loving parental environment in these early years and to link parents to the support services that can help them achieve this. To do this VFW has to bring together early childhood education, social and health services to demonstrate an integrated range of services and a 'one stop shop' where people can access these services. The event has to be culturally rich and great fun.

In 2014 the event attracted 13,000 people to the Trust Stadium (see figure 1). Seventy three education, social and health services ran information and/or fun activity centres, including, this time, sections focussed on the needs of specific cultures. All day long, on a stage at one end of the stadium, there were dance, comedy and cultural performing groups and interactive events and competitions; at the other end, an array of huge bouncy castles; and outside, safety displays, food stalls, rides and more information services.

Every year an extensive evaluation of TDO shows that people come from all cultural groups, pretty much aligned at level of their representation in the local community, but with 20% coming from communities outside the west. In last year's independently produced evaluation done by Colmar Brunton for the Auckland City Council showed that participants generally love the event, with 80% saying they would recommend it to a friend and 77% expecting to return next year. Further, 94% felt that *Auckland Council should support events like this*, 87% felt that *events like this make Auckland a great place to live* and 83% felt that *events like this make me proud to live in Auckland*. The event has a clear *feel-good* factor, but it also translates to actions.

No one comes to TDO with the expectation that they will learn useful things that in small ways will transform their lives (see table 1). More than 70% come *for fun* and *having a day out* that's *good for their children*. It's a chance to *spend time with friends/family* and it's *free* say another 40%. When asked what *one thing* was most *useful* that they got from TDO on the day, one participant retorted - *wasn't aware it was meant to be USEFUL! I thought it was meant to be fun*. However, watching or participating in activities in which the children are having great fun may in itself be useful learning experience for stressed parents.

**Table 1:** What the 351 interviewed TDO participants found was the *ONE most useful thing from today*. Predicted numbers affected is an extrapolation from 351 interviewees to the 5181 adults estimated to have attended Toddler Day Out – Great Parenting Fair

Information/support area	% response	predicted numbers affected
Having fun, great rides	17.9%	930
Play activities, parenting resources	12.3%	635
Nothing, not sure, confused	12.0%	620
No answer	12.0%	620
General information	10.5%	546
Early childhood education services	8.5%	443
Safety in the home, in the car, first aid	6.6%	340
Health and dental health	5.7%	295
Fire safety	3.1%	162
Healthy eating and nutrition	2.6%	133
Connection to families, cultures, community	2.6%	133
Chance to give feedback	2.0%	103
Connection with farm animals	1.4%	74
Ease of access	1.4%	74
The market/food stalls	0.9%	44
Dads, single parent support	0.6%	30
Total	100.0%	5,181

Table 1 (previous page) shows us what was the *one most useful thing* the 351 participants found on the day and extrapolates this to the adults that attended. Previous 2010 data showed the ratio of children to adults is 1.51, which means that approximately 40% of those attending were adults. So having fun doing the children's activities and going on the bouncy castles and carnival rides outside was the biggest deal for nearly a fifth of the adults, suggesting that at least 930 adults went home that day feeling that they had given their children a good time.

Over 50% indicated that they had got useful information from the day. Twelve percent (representing 635 adults) had taken home ideas about child development, how to play with their children, how manage difficult behaviour, and how to access community activities (sport, toy library, dance, gymnastics) and parent support and training. A further 10% (500 adults) found out about safety issues in the home or car or about fire safety; 8.5% (443 adults) had found out useful information about early childhood education services; around 8% (428 adults) had got useful health, dental, nutrition or healthy eating information and over 10% (546 adults) valued generally the information they received on the day. Even the 1% (30 adults) who most valued the dads' or sole parents' information or support represents an important resource being fed back into the community, and that of being connected to community was most useful outcome for 2.6% (representing 133 adults) of the interviewees. One describes this connection - *Auckland seems to be incorporating these great community events for every culture to bring us as a nation closer, I love it!*

**Table 2:** What the 351 interviewed TDO participants reported as changes they have made as a parent, if any, as a result of the information received from 2013 event. 56 responses. Predicted numbers affected is an extrapolation from 351 interviewees to the 7174 adults estimated to have attended Toddler Day Out – Great Parenting Fair in 2013

Information/support area	% response	predicted numbers affected
Play/sport activities, parenting resources	28.3%	2033
Safety in the home and car	16.7%	1196
Nothing, not sure, can't remember	13.3%	957
No time to get info, didn't understand the question, fun	10.0%	717
Joined playgroup or day care service	6.7%	478
Health: immunisation, brushing teeth, asthma, first aid	6.7%	478
Healthy eating, recipes, cheap meals	5.0%	359
Fire safety	5.0%	359
General information	5.0%	359
Community connection	3.3%	239
total	100.0%	7174

Data from 2014 suggests that there should be a high return rate to TDO. However in 2013 only 30% of interviewees had been to previous TDOs. This suggests that TDO is capturing a substantially new group of attendees on each iteration and over the last five years, taking an average of 13000 each year, nearly 50,000 different people will have attended TDO. It could be more. The 2014 report asks participants *what changes have you made as a parent, if any, as a result of the information you received from last year's event?* Only 16% of 351 interviews indicated they had been before..



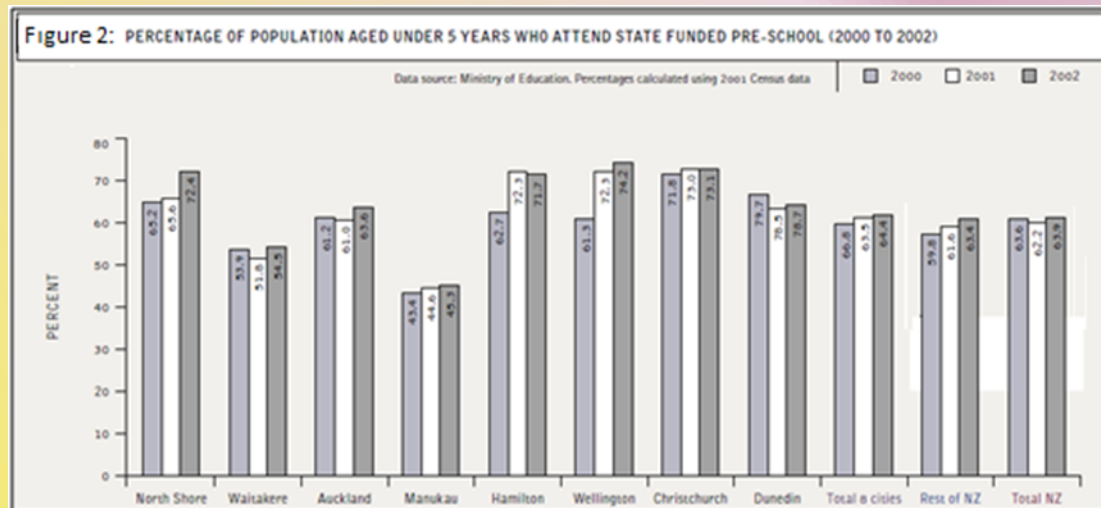
Again extrapolating from these responses and suggesting the participant responses are representative of the attendees at TDO, table 2 (previous page) shows that 77% of those who had attended the 2013 TDO, one year later, could attest to changes they had made that as parents as result of that attendance. These involved getting children engaged in sport, dance or swimming; being a more positive, engaged and informed parent or grandparent; enrolling in ECE services; addressing home, car, water and fire safety issues and a range of health and nutrition changes; doing first aid; and generally engaging with information of the event and taking away an attitude of community care and wanting to pass the information on to others. Since 18000 were estimated to have attended in 2013, this represents 7174 adults and potentially 5500 people who have actioned ideas they got from TDO in 2013.



### **What this means for West Auckland ...**

While no claim can yet be made that the data presented is statistically representative of the attendees at TDO events, a further analysis of the evaluations of the event over nine years will show that the response to TDO is consistently very positive and that the information and activities presented on the day are highly valued and that the participants are culturally representative of West Auckland communities. Of these nine evaluations, three are from two different independent research companies and six have been in-house.

What we are claiming is that data presented shows the deep roots and great capacity for cultural change of the event. Returning to issues that triggered TDO in the first place, poor participation rates in early childhood education and high rates of child referral to CYFS for neglect and abuse - have things changed in West Auckland since 2003? The starting point for concern about ECE participation rates is from data calculated from the 2001 Census showing regional differences in participation in state funded early childhood education. At 54.5% for Waitakere City in 2002, the percent of under 5s in state-funded services is 10% lower than the NZ average and only Manukau at 45% is worse, with most big cities being around 20% better than Waitakere (see figure 2 over the page).



By 2014 the gap between Waitakere and Manukau and other cities and New Zealand as a whole has narrowed from 10-30% to 1-10% (see table 3). However, table 3 demonstrates (in line with general New Zealand data) that levels of poverty are a powerful influence on ECE participation and the outcomes for the local boards that formed the old city of Waitakere, while excellent, are no better than the improvements that have occurred in Manukau. There is no unique feature of the West Auckland data that could suggest that TDO has provided a resource for change that may not be available elsewhere.

**Table 3: Change in participation in Early Childhood Education 2002 - 2013 and the relationship between**

City	% participation in state-funded ECE 2002	Local Board	% participation in ECE 2014	average decile
NorthShore/Waitakere	72.4	Upper Harbour	98.8	8.9
North Shore	72.4	Kaipatiki	97.5	7.6
Auckland	63.6	Waitemata	97.0	6.5
Waitakere	54.5	Waitakere Ranges	96.9	6.6
		Henderson-Massey	94.6	3.7
		Whau	93.4	3.8
Manukau	45.3	Papakura	92.9	3.6
		Otara-Papatoetoe	91.3	1.6
		Manurewa	89.9	2.0
		Mangere-Otahuhu	85.8	1.4
New Zealand total	63.9	New Zealand total	96.1	na

The data on child abuse tells a different story. In 2000 *the rate of care and protection notifications to Child Youth and Family Services in Waitakere City is the highest in New Zealand* according to data provided by Child Youth and Family services (CYFS). The rates of care and protection notifications to CYFS were around a 50% higher than Manukau and double those of North Shore and Auckland. A more recent report suggest by about 2010 that the rates of substantiated abuse for Waitakere were falling and although still high were better than Manukau and some other parts of New Zealand. CYFS data from 2010 to 2014 gives us an up to date picture in figure 3

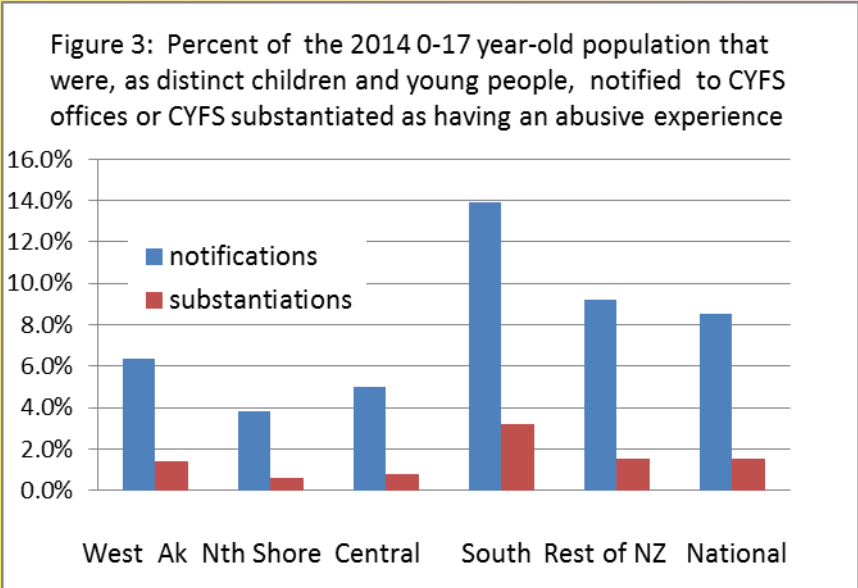
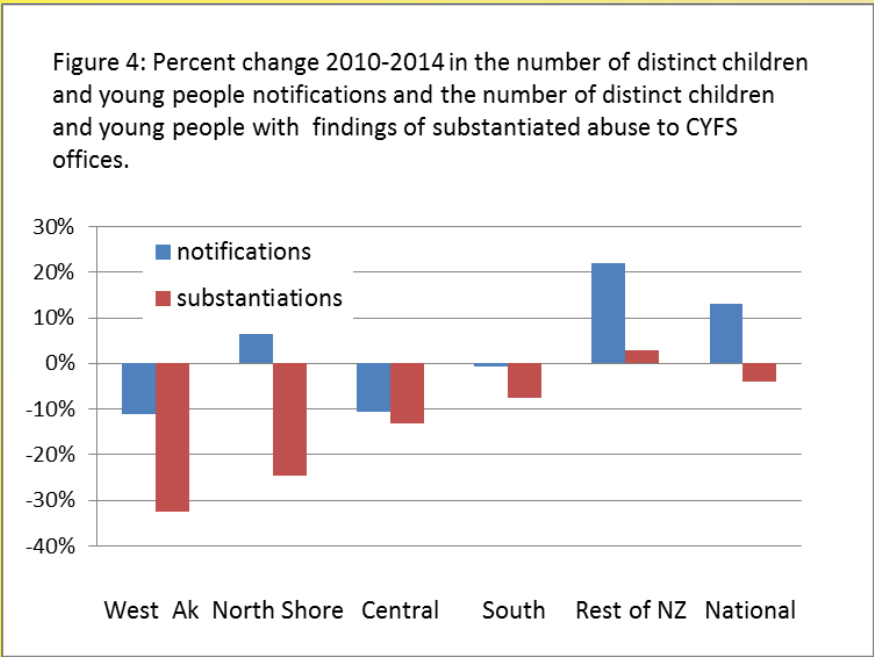


Figure 3 gives population rates of notification of child abuse as 6.4% for West Auckland, well below the rates for South Auckland (13.9%), the national average (8.6%) and the rest of New Zealand (9.2%), although still higher than central Auckland and North Shore. The same pattern holds when we look at substantiated cases on abuse, where West Auckland’s rate (1.4%) is now lower that the national average (1.5%). Figure 4 shows just how dramatic this shift is. The 11% drop in notifications is against a 13% increase nationally from 2010 to 2014 and 22% increase for the rest of New Zealand. Substantiations are down by a third, against a 3% increase for the rest of New Zealand.



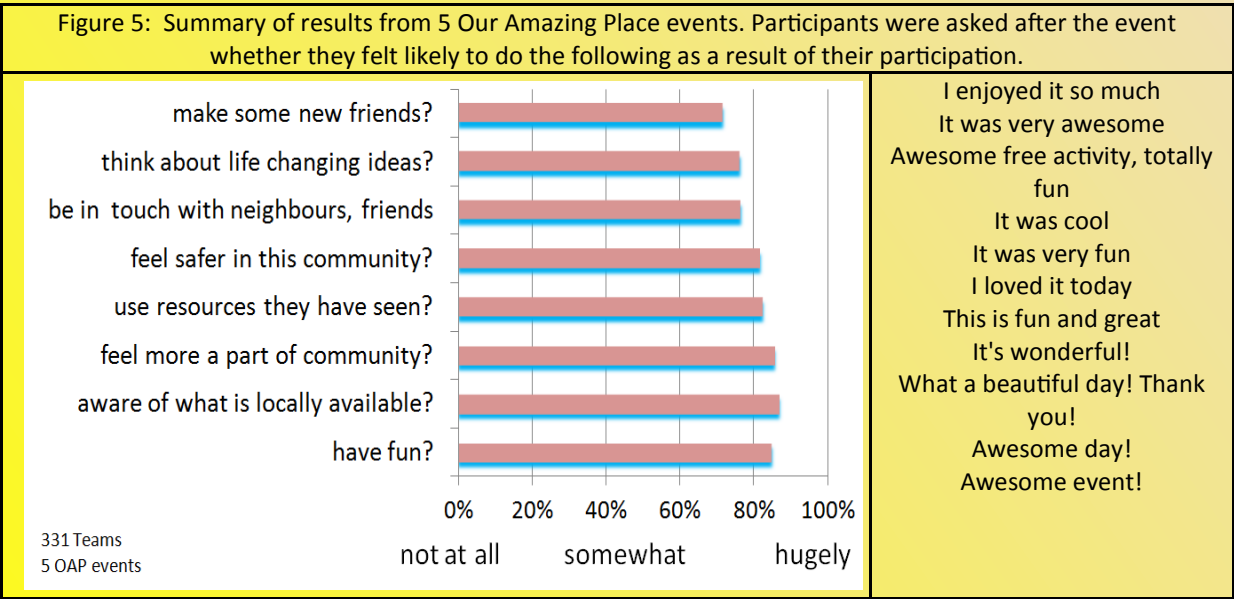


## Something unique is happening . . .

This data clearly suggests that something unique has been happening in West Auckland over the last five years that has shifted the way that parents in particular respond to children. If we'd just kept up with the rest of Auckland another 288 children would have substantiated experiences of abuse. If we'd just kept up with the rest New Zealand that would mean another 464 abused children – a whole primary school. We're not suggesting that TDO alone has produced this change. There are many great NGO and state organisations in the West running strong family and child support prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programmes as well as national campaigns (e.g. 'Its Not OK') and VFW itself runs complimentary programmes such the Promoting Great Parenting Network in which up to 160 agencies collaborate on projects, events and programmes to support parenting. However, none of this is unique to West Auckland, and TDO stands out as an event of sufficient duration, difference and scale to be responsible for that extra shift.



We can go further. VFW has other arms, more focussed on direct engagement with sub-sections of the community and schools. Our Amazing Place – Community Treasure Hunt is a model programme designed to get people to explore their own community, understand the resources in their community and connect with each other. Paintings, music, games, activities, gardens, conversations, vistas real and imagined and provocations are peppered around the route which ends with a great party and prize-giving. As we can see in figure 5, people love it. In 2014 people using our templates and advisors ran Our Amazing Place in Massey, MPHS, Te Atatu, Nelson, Dunedin and South Africa, involving more than 1000 people and around 20 stakeholder groups for each event. Many places in West Auckland are onto their third and fourth iterations of Our Amazing Place involving 2,000-3,000 people and once again we want to explore how this affects the fabric of life in West Auckland.



2000 – 3000 people involved in OAP in the West



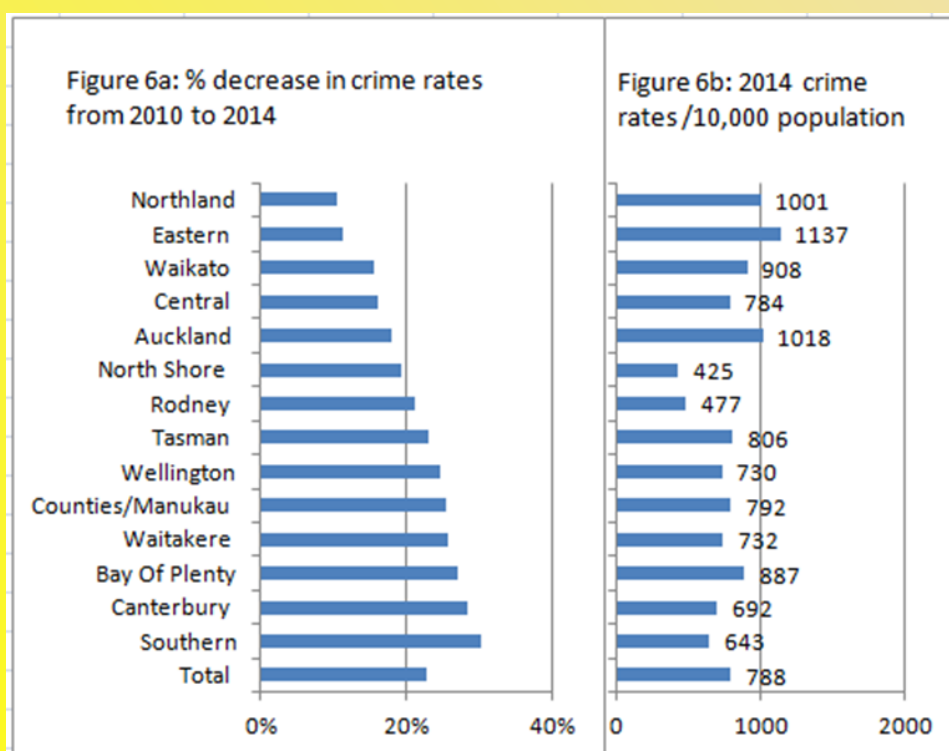
## JADE SPEAKS UP



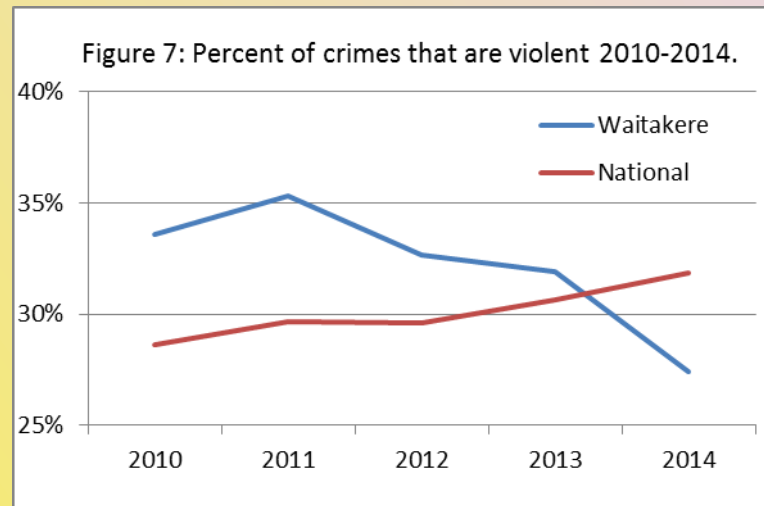
Very recently we have launched another model project, *Jade Speaks Up* - an eight minute animation with three workbooks – designed to help teachers and professionals support children dealing with issues of violence, threats of violence and bullying. This programme is built on the *Violence Free Begins With Me* programme which we have run for several years in West Auckland primary and intermediate schools. In a year, we have sold nearly 200 copies of *Jade Speaks Up* so each animation may be seen by 20-50 children a year – between 4,000 and 10,000 children around the country.

## What is the cumulative effect of the work?

These projects (TDO, Our Amazing Place and Jade Speaks Up) are three of a dozen model projects run by VFW that build community resilience and prevent violence. Like TDO, both Our Amazing Place and Jade Speaks Up, while easily available elsewhere through our website, have had much more use in West Auckland and therefore might have an impact on measures like crime rates, particularly crimes of violence. Figures 6a and b show that the Waitakere police district, basically covering West Auckland, has had a 27% drop in crime rates over the last five years.



That's over 5000 crimes that didn't happen last year – more than 14 crimes every day. The overall rate of crime is 7% lower than the national average and West Auckland looks like one of the safer places in New Zealand to live, despite the impressions and labels like *murder capital* that media attributed to the recent spate of high profile attacks and killings in and around Henderson. On top of this, figure 7 shows that violent crimes (homicide and related offences, acts intended to cause injury, sexual assault and related offences, dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons, abduction, harassment and other related offences against a person, robbery, extortion and related offences, and unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter) are declining as a percent of total crime in the Waitakere police district (down 6% since 2010), but increasing nationally (up 3%).



These against the trend changes in crime rates and abuse substantiations are not because West Auckland has become prosperous. If anything the 2013 Census data suggests that it has become less so. While there are pockets of affluence, the decile ratings in table 3, show that more than three quarters of the West are poor. Something is buoying this community and while it will not be the just the work of VFW, it is unusual and we need to understand what it is. Community development organisations that concentrate on shifting hearts and minds rather than providing services, have a hard job showing we make the difference that can encourage funders to provide the resources to keep projects alive over the longer time scales in which we weave our magic. It is our intention to change this, by a careful exploration of the alignment of our interventions with the hard data of community change.

We're not rich, but we're going places

What is buoying this economically poor community?

It is unusual and we need to understand what it is.

We focus on shifting hearts and minds - how can we encourage funders to keep our projects alive over the longer time scales in which we weave our magic?

We have to carefully explore the alignment of our interventions with the hard data of community change.





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