

# Drains for Rains

*By Terry Hodder, Ko te Aroha Trust Children's Centre*

In 2024, as part of our enviro vision to be a more sustainable centre and to teach our tamariki to be life long kaitiaki (guardians of our environment), Ko te Aroha Children's Centre in Masterton began a "Drains for Rains" project – and what a fantastic project it was and continues to be!

For us, this project was about teaching our tamariki about the effects of careless actions by humans on the worlds animals and environment, and letting them see they can make a difference.



## How it Began...

It started with discussions at mat time about why it is important that "drains are only for rains", why we need to keep our drains clean from rubbish, and learning where the water from our drains ends up. As tamariki understanding grew and they started to realise that all rubbish leads to the ocean and puts our wildlife in danger. These discussions were sometimes quite tough, as tamariki often expressed sadness for our water creatures.

Our learning involved excursions to local waterways and awa. On one of these trips to our local (Mākoura) stream, tamariki were very concerned when they arrived to see an abundance of rubbish in the tunas' where. The kaiako talked to the tamariki and showed them a story about one of our tuakana cleaning another of our local (Waipoua) awa. This sparked interest, and our tamariki wanted to be kaitiaki too by cleaning our stream so that the tuna could live peacefully. It was amazing for the tamariki to see that once the rubbish had been cleared, the tuna came out to say "kia ora"; almost as if they were saying thank you!



## The Learning Continued...

Post excursion, our tamariki felt sad about the rubbish hurting tuna and all living creatures, and expressed that they wanted to clean more local awa and creeks. With much interest and curiosity, kaiako took the tamariki to look through the grate of our storm drain at the Centre. Tamariki realised there were lots of toys and rubbish in our own drain a very enthusiastic whakapai (tidy up) began!

On reflection, tamariki reported the following on our activity:

What did you see down the drain?

- A shovel and toys
- Sad worms with mamae (in pain or hurt)
- Lots of yucky paper
- A toy train

How did it make you feel, when we cleaned the drain?

- So so happy
- Yucky
- I felt sad like ranginui when he cries
- The fish were sad but now they are happy
- It was sad if the fish die
- I feel happy now; I was sad
- I felt excited to clean the drain
- I wan the koura (freshwater crayfish) to be happy



### Extending the Learning

This learning and interest has been extended with all sorts of activities and mahi over the months that have followed, and supports our commitment to Wairarapatanga and protecting our whēnua. One such activity was a source of great discussion and input from our tamariki – the painting of very own awa! Informed by designs created by the children, two of our centre whānau got to work and painted (helped and overseen by very enthusiastic site managers) an awa complete with tuna flowing to our storm drain.



A year on from our first focused hikoi to the awa, our tamariki continue to inspire us with their desire to learn about waterways, the creatures that make them their home and, most importantly, ways we can protect both of these. Kaiako and tamariki have completed lots of research and follow up activities, and tamariki show compassion and concern for our local awa and creeks, taking their learning and strong voices home to express to their whānau: “no rubbish in our awa”. Our tamariki are becoming kaitiaki of our whēnua. We couldn’t be more proud of them, embracing new learning, their mahi and their drive for change.

### About the Author

Terry Hodder is the manager of Ko te Aroha Trust Children’s Centre in Masterton, a small community-based mixed-age service where aroha is the first language. Ko te Aroha place emphasis on the wellbeing of children, and are committed to supporting the individual needs of tamariki and whānau through a range of experiences and opportunities. Whānau are encouraged to be involved in many aspects of curriculum delivery, and tamariki enjoy regular excursions into the wider Wairarapa community. Ko te Aroha Children’s Centre is a valued member of the Early Childhood Council.

