

## **Te Mānuka-o-Hotuni Legendary Guardian Taniwha, Kaiwhare, inspires new multi-million-dollar playground at Auckland's Waiata Shores**

**Friday 14 June 2024**

Elements of traditional Māori play, alongside puuraakau of the local area have been the inspiration for the design of a beautiful contemporary new playground Fletcher Living is gifting to the community of Waiata Shores.

Te Waituarua Reserve Playground has been brought to life thanks to a collaboration between Fletcher Living and local iwi, represented by Kathleen Wilson of Te Akitai Waiohū, and Clynt White, Urban Designer from Waahi Wairua.

Originally designated as a grass reserve, Fletcher Living saw the potential for the site to be developed into a destination space for the community and Aucklanders beyond. The \$2 million playground has been fully funded by Fletcher Living and is being gifted to the Council for the enjoyment of everyone.

“Fostering a sense of community is a core part of our Fletcher Living purpose. Having a space where families can gather, relax and share some carefree moments encourages this. By collaborating with local iwi, Auckland Council, and the Local Board, we have created a destination playground with a cultural narrative to provide a unique play experience for families,” says Steve Evans, Chief Executive of Fletcher Building's Residential and Development Division.

Kathleen Wilson's deep understanding of the story of the local area and Manukau Harbour, combined with Clynt White's innovative design concepts, has resulted in a playground experience that blends traditional ngahere (forest) play with contemporary elements.

Kathleen explains, “I took inspiration from the presence of Kaiwhare, the guardian taniwha of the Manukau Harbour, who often presents himself as a whai (stingray), in the layout of the playground. I wanted the key elements to capture this magnificent being. The contoured open field and pump track landscape mimic the movement of its fins, while the planting outlines the shape of the whai, including its gills and nostrils. The moari (big swing) is even positioned to replicate its spine.

“Clynt did an incredible job bringing to life the vision of the waves in the Manukau Harbour. The playground includes activities like flowing and spinning play equipment, symbolising the movement and turbulence of the water in the harbour, which forms the perfect backdrop to this playground.”

The playground also features an impressive 120m BMX pump track, designed and built by mountain bike cycling champion, Byron Scott and his pro-BMX team at Trailpro Ltd.

"We loved designing this track. Pump tracks are a fantastic way to encourage people to get active on their bikes, scooters, skateboards, or even roller skates. We worked hard to make sure this pump track was inclusive for everyone, from absolute beginners and toddlers to professional BMX riders. It has a directional flow to ensure that users can participate safely without the risk of collisions," says Byron Scott, Managing Director of Trailpro Ltd.

Waiata Shores, was the former Manukau Golf Club and has rapidly gained popularity as a place to call home since Fletcher Living started the residential development in 2018.

“I hope the addition of the Te Waituarua Reserve Playground fires up the imagination and the fun factor for the whanau and tamariki of Waiata Shores as well as the wider community. Looking ahead, we will be providing a shared path linking Waiata Shores to Conifer Grove. This connection will link to the Southern cycleway on SH1 positioning Te Waituarua Reserve Playground as a central recreational area for residents and visitors alike.

“We fully expect this playground to become a favourite spot for everyone, encouraging community connection and fun active outdoor play for years to come,” says Steve Evans.

Brent Catchpole, Chair of the Papakura Local Board is delighted to see the new Te Waituarua Reserve Playground opened to the public, he said “The Papakura Local Board area is experiencing some of the fastest population growth in New Zealand, understandably keeping pace with public amenities is never far from our mind. We are very grateful for the generosity of Fletcher Living in providing the community with a brand new, contemporary playground which we know will be the source of many happy memories.

Te Waituarua Reserve Playground was blessed by local iwi on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and officially opened for fun to begin on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

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