

skylight

Annual Report

Guiding tamariki and rangatahi hauora through responsive, informed, and effective practice

2025 - 2026

Te Ata o Te Rangi

Whakatūwherangia te matapihi ki te ōrunga
Whakatūwherangia kia wātea,
Whakatūwherangia kia whitikina e te rā,
Whakatūwherangia kia pūrea e te hau,
Kia horoia e te ua.

Kia tū ko te mauri ora,
Toitū, tūroa

Tū Te Ata o Te Rangi
Tihei Mauriora!

About Us

Our Vision

In Aotearoa tamariki and rangatahi are empowered to thrive.

Our Mission

Guiding tamariki and rangatahi hauora, through responsive, informed and effective practice

Our Values

Ko tā te tamaiti: Child Centric
Ngākau pono: Integrity
Whakamanamanahia: Empowered / Uplifting Relationships
Tāngata Rite: Equity

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Report from the Chair

Dr Nicole Coupe

Tēnā koutou katoa,

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the extraordinary impact Skylight continues to have on the lives of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau throughout Aotearoa. In a year marked by increasing demand for our services and ongoing challenges across the social and mental health sectors, Skylight has not only responded but flourished, remaining steadfast in our commitment to ensuring young people are empowered to thrive.

This year has seen significant achievements across the organisation. We have expanded our reach, strengthened our services, progressed our commitment to becoming a Te Tiriti-led organisation, and secured important long-term funding that will help sustain and grow our impact into the future. The outcomes reflected throughout this report are a testament to the expertise, passion and dedication of everyone who contributes to Skylight's mission.

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and thanks to our Chief Executive, Kathryn Ross, for her outstanding leadership throughout the year. Kath has continued to lead with vision, courage and unwavering commitment to the children, young people and families we serve. Under her guidance, Skylight has strengthened its foundations while continuing to innovate and respond to emerging needs. On behalf of the Board, I acknowledge and celebrate the incredible work she has done and continues to do for our organisation and the communities we serve.

I also wish to acknowledge Skylight's remarkable staff, contractors, volunteers and partners. The compassion, professionalism and dedication they demonstrate every day enables Skylight to deliver meaningful support to thousands of people across the country. Their work changes lives, often at moments when support is needed most.

My sincere thanks also goes to my fellow Board members. Governance within the not-for-profit sector is voluntary, demanding and often undertaken quietly behind the scenes. The wisdom, expertise and commitment of our Board have been instrumental in helping Skylight navigate both opportunities and challenges. I am deeply grateful for the generosity with which each member has contributed their time, knowledge and energy to stewarding this organisation.

This year we also farewell Nikki Franklin, our HR Committee extraordinaire. Nikki's contribution has been exceptional. Her expertise, practical advice and commitment to supporting good people practices have strengthened Skylight considerably. On behalf of the Board and organisation, I thank Nikki for her valued service and wish her every success for the future.

At the same time, I am delighted to welcome Akasha Rio as a full Board member following her valuable contribution as an advisory member. Akasha has already demonstrated a strong commitment to Skylight's purpose and values, and I look forward to seeing the insight and leadership she will continue to bring as a member of the Board proper.

This report also marks a personal milestone. Having completed my term, this will be my final annual report as Chair of Skylight Trust. Serving as Chair has been both a privilege and a profound honour. I have witnessed firsthand the commitment of our people, the resilience of the young people and families we support, and the growing influence Skylight continues to have across Aotearoa. While I step down from this role with a sense of pride in what we have achieved together, I do so with complete confidence in Skylight's future.

The organisation is well-positioned, guided by a capable leadership team, a committed Board, dedicated staff and a clear strategic direction. Most importantly, it remains anchored to its enduring purpose: supporting the hauora of tamariki and rangatahi so they can navigate life's challenges and flourish.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to Skylight's journey this past year. Together, we are making a meaningful difference.

Ngā mihi nui,



Dr Nicole Coupe
Chair, Skylight Trust

Report from the Chief Executive

Kathryn Ross

Tēnā koutou katoa,

As Skylight approaches its 30th birthday, we honoured our history by looking forward with renewed determination. Our purpose remains clear: to guide the hauora of tamariki and rangatahi through responsive, informed and effective practice, so they are empowered to thrive.

During 2025/26, we strengthened our impact and reach despite a challenging funding and workforce environment. We advanced the quality and evidence base of our programmes and made significant progress on refreshing Travellers with Health New Zealand, Victoria University of Wellington, our advisory group and twelve pilot schools. Next year, we will celebrate both the refreshed programme and 25 years of Travellers, supporting Year 9 students across Aotearoa.

We also completed the Te Korowai pilot for Years 6–8, achieving an almost 20% uplift in participant wellbeing. Following further refinement, we plan to expand delivery in South Canterbury, Waikato and Wellington, while seeking partners who share our ambition to take this promising programme nationwide.

A major milestone was securing a four-year, $6.97 million Social Investment Agency consolidated contract through to December 2030. We embedded our co-chairing governance arrangements and continued becoming a Te Tiriti-led organisation. With our new Pou Ārahi, we accelerated Te Kunenga and its action plan, strengthened cultural capability, applied a Tiriti lens to policy reviews, and deepened iwi and community relationships.

Our new website, created in-house, reflects the talent of our kaimahi and makes Skylight more accessible to the tamariki, rangatahi and whānau we serve.

Client care remained at the heart of our mahi: we supported more young people and delivered more counselling sessions than ever before. As demand grows, we will keep finding creative, effective ways to meet it.

We used reserves to respond to increasing need and made careful choices to protect frontline impact. This was not easy. I offer my deepest thanks to every member of our staff. Your compassion, professionalism, courage and willingness to go the extra mile to bring Skylight's mission to life every day. It is a privilege to serve alongside you.

I also sincerely thank our Board for its stewardship, wisdom and unwavering commitment to our purpose. Your leadership has helped us navigate complexity, strengthen our foundations and remain focused on equitable outcomes for young people.

Together, our Board and kaimahi have shown what values-led service looks like.
To our partners, funders and communities: thank you for your trust and support. We could not do this mahi without you.

The year ahead will bring challenges, but our commitment is steadfast. We will continue listening, learning and acting with integrity so that those who need Skylight most can access support, build resilience and thrive.

Ngā mihi nui,



Kathryn Ross
Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive

Our Year at a Glance

What did we do, who benefited, and how did we do?

For the year ended 30 June 2026

Working with Community Education Providers

173

active education partners in the year

Skylight works with education providers to deliver information and education on wellbeing, resilience, mental agility, and programmes.

Clinical Interactions with Children & Young People

8,583

interactions in the year

Skylight's team interacts with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau, and communities — including counselling, bereavement support, and resilience workshops.

Working with Whānau Workshop Participants

253

workshop participants in the year

Skylight provides information and training workshops, offering practical advice to help parents understand and manage their children's needs during challenging times.

Resource Material Recipients

758

free resource pack recipients in the year

Skylight provides information and resources to help people through challenging times such as grief, loss, or relationship breakdown.

TRAVELLERS & PROGRAMME — 25 YEARS

1 in 6

year 9 students participate in the Travellers Programme

63
Schools in 2025/26

13,349
Wellbeing Surveys Completed

TRAVELLERS RETURNS $3.30 IN SOCIAL VALUE FOR EVERY $1 INVESTED — BOOSTING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, MENTAL HEALTH AND REDUCING RISKY BEHAVIOUR.

TRAVELLERS HAS BEEN RUN IN OVER 300 SCHOOLS.

Improving Psychological Wellbeing in Schools

The Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu Counselling in Schools programme shows significant gains in psychological wellbeing, especially for students in high distress.

- **80%** report improved psychological health
- **90%** of those experiencing highest level of distress saw improvement
- **61%** increase in attendance among students in highest distress
- **67%** learning progress increased among students in highest distress

Bereavement Support for Children & Families

25

children attended Matika and received bereavement support this year

HeartSong – for bereaved parents – has been going for 15 years.

Free Counselling in Pōneke

200+

counselling clients seen for free in Pōneke

Tamariki Engaged in Tai-Oranga

246

tamariki engaged in Tai-Oranga in 2025/26

And over 77% learned emotional regulation skills and over 81% felt better.

Te Korowai Pilot Programme

Nearly 20%

increase in wellbeing for pilot participants.

> "From the first session, I knew I was in safe hands"

> "I have been able to heal and move forward with hope"

> "...I always felt respected, listened to, and safe."

Te Kunenga and being a Te Tiriti led organisation

Over the past year, Te Kunenga — Skylight's Māori Strategy and Action Plan — has moved from planning into action. What started as groundwork has become real, organisation-wide change, deepening our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and laying the groundwork for lasting, equitable outcomes for Māori tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau.

This year, we've focused on strengthening cultural capability across kaimahi, contractors, and governance members — through professional learning, in-house Te Reo Māori and tikanga development, cultural supervision, and resources that build confidence in Te Ao Māori and mātauranga. Cultural responsiveness is shifting from individual practice into everyday culture.

We've also aligned our systems, policies, and governance with Te Tiriti-led values — across HR, intellectual property, AI use, and cultural safeguards — so these commitments are embedded sustainably. Service and programme reviews have focused on weaving mātauranga Māori into design and delivery from the outset.

Relationship building remains a priority — approached with care and respect, knowing authentic partnerships take time and trust. Our connections with Māori communities, organisations, and potential partners keep growing, at a pace shaped by readiness on both sides.

Together, this marks a shift from intention to practice. The foundations are in place, our capability keeps strengthening, and Te Tiriti-led thinking is increasingly evident across how we operate, decide, and plan for the future.

The Pou Ārahi role has laid a strong foundation for cultural leadership, organisational learning, and relationship building. This is a long-term commitment and Skylight Trust is showing a genuine, growing commitment to cultural integrity, Te Ao Māori, and the aspirations of Te Kunenga.





Awhi Mai Awhi Atu

Strong wellbeing helps tamariki learn, grow, and succeed. Evidence shows that children who feel emotionally supported are more likely to attend school, engage in learning, and achieve positive educational outcomes. Through Awhi Mai Awhi Atu Counselling in Schools, Skylight provides evidence-based support that helps primary and intermediate-aged students build resilience, navigate challenges, and develop the confidence to thrive at school and in their communities.

> *"I have just completed my sessions with a young person who had started at a new school with significant challenges around managing anxiety. Throughout our mahi together, she was able to transition from attendance in the mornings, to expanding to half days, and by the conclusion of our sessions she been attending full days at school. Our work together was focussed on exploring coping strategies and techniques to support her anxiety and identify support systems to help her at school. She is now attending school events and has branched out to other extra-curricular activities as well outside of school."*
>
> **Skylight school counsellor**

Top four reasons for referrals

Jul 2025 – Jun 2026

Anxiety	Behaviour	Emotional regulation	Grief
187	178	159	130

Referrals 1,042

Therapeutic sessions 8,094

Counselling and other Therapies

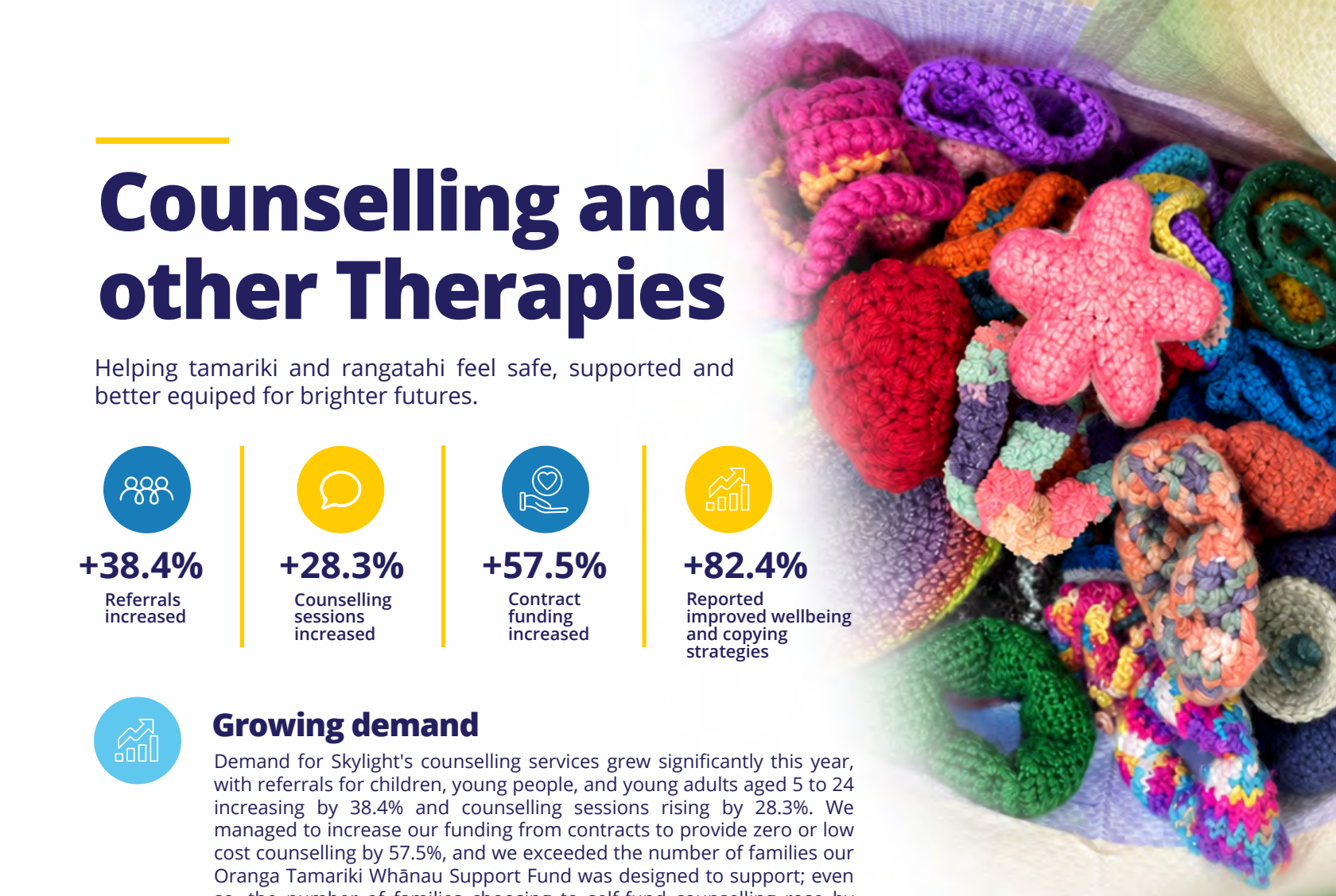
Helping tamariki and rangatahi feel safe, supported and better equiped for brighter futures.

+38.4%
Referrals increased

+28.3%
Counselling sessions increased

+57.5%
Contract funding increased

+82.4%
Reported improved wellbeing and copying strategies



Growing demand

Demand for Skylight's counselling services grew significantly this year, with referrals for children, young people, and young adults aged 5 to 24 increasing by 38.4% and counselling sessions rising by 28.3%. We managed to increase our funding from contracts to provide zero or low cost counselling by 57.5%, and we exceeded the number of families our Oranga Tamariki Whānau Support Fund was designed to support; even so, the number of families choosing to self-fund counselling rose by 56.8%, reflecting both the scale of unmet need and the value families place on timely support and our services.

Expanding access and therapeutic options

In response, we expanded our therapist team to reduce wait times and improve access for children, young people, and their whānau, while also growing our capacity to offer creative modalities such as music and art therapy — giving children and young people more ways to engage in the therapeutic process.

Responding to complex needs

Referrals continue to reflect rising distress among tamariki and rangatahi, with many young people needing support to build the skills to navigate complex social, emotional, and environmental challenges.

We saw a significant number of neurodiverse children and young people accessing therapy to strengthen emotional regulation and coping skills, alongside a notable rise in referrals linked to parental conflict and separation — particularly where relationships are highly acrimonious — as young people adjust to life across separate households.

82.4%

We are pleased that four in every five children and young people **(82.4%)** report an improvement in their wellbeing and coping strategies as a result of engaging with us.

Programmes



Tai Oranga (Healing Tide)

is a 4-hour school-based wellbeing programme for tamariki aged 7-9 years old. This programme focuses on social connections, physical wellbeing and emotional awareness through a combination of psychoeducation, kōrero, movement-based activities, mindfulness practices, and artwork.

This year, the programme has been delivered to 246 tamariki across 5 schools in the Wellington region.

> *"I love seeing them engage with each other differently and your work reinforces what we're trying to achieve with our work in MITEY. I've loved our morning together and I have new ideas for my own practice."* *(school counsellor)*



Matika (Stand Strong)

is an 8-week programme that supports tamariki aged 6–12 who have experienced the death of someone close to them. Delivered in small groups of up to eight participants, Skylight has run four groups this year, supporting 25 grieving tamariki across Wellington.

> *"Very helpful. It has shown them that they aren't alone in their situation. Gives them a positive, safe space to talk about their [loved one], their grief, and their feelings."* *(Caregiver)*

Programmes

Pathfinders

is a 6-hour programme for young women and non-binary rangatahi aged 12 to 16 years.

Through kōrero, creative arts, and music, Pathfinders explores the theme of identity through three key areas of Whakapapa, Whānau, and Me.

This year, Skylight has delivered Pathfinders to 115 young people, across 4 schools in the Wellington region.

> *"I learnt more about my personal identity and how important it is to know where you come from"* *(participant)*

Sound Bridge



is a music therapy group designed for young people aged 12–18 who want to play, jam, and create music alongside peers. It offers a safe, supportive space to explore music, connection, and identity — helping rangatahi build confidence and community through shared creativity.

This year, Skylight delivered Sound Bridge throughout each school term. We were also pleased to welcome a new facilitator whose fresh approach to communicating and delivering the programme is already bringing new energy to how we engage with young people. Their creative input is helping shape the next phase of Sound Bridge as we look to expand its reach and impact in the coming year.

Programmes

Travellers (refresh, new website and pilot)

Travellers is a 10-session, small-group wellbeing programme for Year 9 students. A confidential survey of the whole cohort identifies those who would benefit most. Running in Aotearoa schools since 2001, it is independently assessed by Impact Lab as returning $3.30 for every dollar invested.

This year, 13,349 students completed the wellbeing survey, and thirteen new schools joined the programme. It was also a landmark year for the programme's future: we piloted a fully refreshed Travellers with twelve schools, deepened our research partnership with Victoria University of Wellington, and launched a new website, all in preparation for a national roll-out of the refreshed programme in 2027.



> *"What I like the most about Travellers is actually getting to know how life is like when you have obstacles in the way and you have other people to help you out as feeling of support within connections with the people you are close to."* *(participant)*

Parenting through Separation

This year, Skylight facilitators continued to deliver the Parenting through Separation programme across Wellington, Porirua, Kāpiti, and Lower Hutt, supporting parents to navigate separation with their children's wellbeing at the heart.

In small, supportive groups, parents connected with others in similar situations and worked through practical parenting plans — clear, flexible, and Family Court-free. To reach more families, we expanded delivery into the Wairarapa and grew our facilitator team to support this wider footprint, while also exploring online delivery to improve accessibility for parents who face distance, time, or mobility barriers. Together, these changes mean more parents across the region can access the support they need, when and how it suits them. Over the year, 253 people attended the programme, across 48 sessions. **86.17%** agree or strongly agree that the programme has provided them with tools to better manage positive co-parenting.



86.17%

Agree or strongly agree that the programme has provided them with tools to better manage positive co-parenting

Programmes

Te Korowai rollout
in South Canterbury



Te Korowai is a wellbeing and resilience programme developed by Skylight to support tamariki in years 6-8 to navigate change with confidence. The 10-week small group programme creates a safe space for tamariki to talk, create, reflect and develop practical skills to help them cope with life's challenges. It takes a holistic, culturally grounded approach based on Te Whare Tapa Whā to strengthen all aspects of wellbeing.

In May, the Ministry of Education confirmed extra funding to pilot Te Korowai in South Canterbury to increase student engagement, enabling extensive resource development and training.

The Skylight team will be rolling out Te Korowai in its Awhi Mai Awhi Atu schools and an additional four schools in South Canterbury during the second half of 2026.

There was nearly a **20%** increase in Wellbeing for pilot participants in Waikato schools.



Partnerships

In June 2026, Skylight was selected as one of just 12 organisations nationwide for the Social Investment Agency's Contract Consolidation initiative. We signed a four-year partnership agreement bringing our school counselling and Whānau Support services across Waikato, Wellington, and South Canterbury into a single outcomes-based agreement. This milestone reflects the strength and consistency of our service delivery, and the confidence funders place in our ability to support communities across multiple regions.

Working with our tertiary sector, we continued to invest in the future of our profession through our intern programme — helping shape the next generation of counsellors and ensuring our expertise carries forward. We continue to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and current research through our partnerships and association with Victoria and Waikato Universities, Weltec and Whitecliffe.

Community engagement and thought leadership

This year, staff across Skylight have actively engaged in raising awareness and advocating for broader access to grief, loss, and trauma support. It's been a busy year in this space: delivering presentations to schools, sector groups, funeral directors, and community organisations. Responding to growing media demand for expert commentary on grief, loss, and children's wellbeing — including op-eds and interviews that have helped bring these conversations into the public eye.

Beyond public-facing advocacy, we have worked to strengthen the sector from within, engaging with networks and meeting directly with decision-makers to advocate for better outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. We've also met with students, sector members, and leaders to hear their perspectives and share ours, building relationships, contributing to sector conversations, and helping shape a stronger, more connected community response to the challenges facing children, young people, and families.



Publications



Our publications continued to be highly valued and widely distributed (both in New Zealand and abroad).

The Colours of Grief books were again our most requested titles, with renewed interest in our Getting Stronger game and cards, as well as our Beyond Words book.

Our easy-to-read leaflets also continued to perform strongly, demonstrating demand for clear and accessible grief support resources.

Colours of Grief Book 3: As the First Anniversary Approaches.

> *"An excellent resource, either as part of a three-book series or for someone approaching the challenge of the first anniversary."*

Child Cancer Foundation shared that our resources are highly valued by their families, noting that they appreciate access to materials they trust to support families well.

Beyond Words: Grieving When Your Child Has Died, has been described as an excellent book with helpful information and practical ideas for supporting someone through the loss of a child.

Watch this space as we update and increase accessibility to our publications.

Statement of performance

Working with Community Education Providers (Number of active education partners in the year)	**2025/2026**	**2024/2025**	**2023/2024**
Based on the need in the community Skylight works with education providers to deliver information and education on well being, resilience mental agility and programmes	173	171	169

Providing clinical interactions with children and young people (no of interactions in the year)	**2025/2026**	**2024/2025**	**2023/2024**
Skylight team interacts with children, young people whānau, and communities. These individual and group interactions can be for counselling, bereavement support, resilience workshops, etc.	8,583	7,610	6,100

Working with whānau (Number of workshop participants in the year)	**2025/2026**	**2024/2025**	**2023/2024**
Skylight provides information and training workshops offering practical advice to help parents understand and manage the needs of their children during challenging times like separation.	253	225	241

Resource Material (Number of free resource pack recipients in the year)	**2025/2026**	**2024/2025**	**2023/2024**
Skylight provides information and resources to help people during challenging times like grief, loss or relationship breakdown.	758	714	676

Summary
Financial Report

(for the Year Ended 30 June 2026)

This Summary Financial Report has been extracted from the full Performance Report of Skylight Trust for the year ended 30 June 2026, which was audited by Moore Markhams Wellington Audit.

Growing demand

For the year ended 30 June 2026, Skylight Trust recorded:

Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Net Deficit
$2,616,410	**$2,756,290**	**($139,880)**
(2025: $2,547,556)	(2025: $2,502,312)	(2025: Net Surplus $45,244)

Revenue was primarily from government contracts ($1,889,793), with additional income from donations, grants, publications, and rental revenue. Expenses mainly related to service delivery ($1,814,537) and administration ($885,395).

Financial Position

As at 30 June 2026:

Total Revenue	**$2,616,410** (2025: $2,547,556)
Total Liabilities	**$326,533** (2025: $367,399)
Net Assets / Accumulated Funds	**$812,853** (2025: $952,733)

Accumulated funds comprise:

General Reserve	**$137,998**
Flashlight Fund	**$16,956**
Accumulated Surpluses	**$657,899**

Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2026, Skylight Trust had:

Net Cash Outflow from Operating Activities (2025: Net Cash Inflow $43,096)	**($108,101)**
Closing Cash Balance (2025: $654,093)	**$815,992**

Basis of Preparation

The summary financial statements have been prepared in accordance with PBE FRS-43: Summary Financial Statements. The full Performance Report has been prepared in accordance with PBE Standards under NZ GAAP for not-for-profit entities.

Note: this summary financial report has been extracted from the audited Performance Report of Skylight Trust for the year ended 30 June 2026. It does not include all disclosures required under Public Entity Standards. For a full understanding of the financial position and performance, readers should refer to the complete Performance Report. This can be requested by contacting us at info@skylight.org.nz.

Our sincere thanks to our funders, sponsors and supporters

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our funders, philanthropic trusts, corporate partners, and individual donors.

Thank you to our contract funders over this past year including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, Oranga Tamariki, Tū Ora Compass Health, and valued partners Dentons, Child Cancer Foundation, and New Zealand Defence Force.

Also, a huge thank you to the generous sponsors, donors and supporters who supported us in kind, with grants or one off donations – Lotteries, ANZ Staff Foundation, Winton and Margaret Bear Charitable Trust, Bupa Foundation, Haven Falls Community Trust, Harbour City Funeral Home, Hutt Mana Charitable Trust, Kapiti Coast District Council, Kapiti Coast Funeral Home, Music Helps, Music Therapy New Zealand, Duncan Warner, Tregaskis Brown, Wellington City New World, Fresh Choice Cuba, The Good Registry, Vaka Atafaga Pacific Nursing Service, TF Hughes, L Patterson, Murray Brocklesby, Willis Bond and Leonid Rozanov - your continued kindness is so very much appreciated.

