

# Strategic Plan 2026 - 2030

The Royal Australian and New Zealand  
College of Psychiatrists



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This artwork, created by Mark Kopua, depicts the meaning behind Tū Te Akaaka Roa. It portrays the intertwined history of two divine principles of te ao Māori, Ranginui and Papatuanuku.

# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Nations and the traditional custodians of the lands and waters now known as Australia, and Māori as tāngata whenua in Aotearoa, also known as New Zealand.

We recognise and value the traditional knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Māori.

We honour and respect the Elders past and present, who weave their wisdom into all realms of life – spiritual, cultural, social, emotional, and physical.

## Recognition of Lived and Living Experience

We recognise those with lived and living experience of mental health challenges and distress, their chosen families, whānau, carers and kin.

Their contributions, diverse perspectives, insight, and courage keep us grounded and inclusive, and focused on humanity, healing, and hope.

We strive to work in genuine partnership in all that we do, honouring their voices by centring their experiences and expertise.

The RANZCP is committed to addressing the longstanding and unacceptable inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, in health outcomes and access to culturally safe mental health care. These inequities reflect the enduring impacts of colonisation, structural disadvantage, systemic racism, and barriers to appropriate and accessible services. Addressing them is central to the College’s vision of equitable mental health care and to its responsibility as a professional and system leader.

The College will advance this commitment by strengthening and sustaining the Indigenous psychiatric workforce, embedding cultural safety across training and professional practice, and ensuring its policy, advocacy and service leadership are grounded in culturally responsive and accountable approaches. This includes increasing the representation of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples across College structures, strengthening education in culturally safe care, and progressing the College’s commitments through its Reconciliation Action Plan and responsibilities in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This artwork was created by Jordan Lovegrove, of the Ngarrindjeri people of the lower Murray River. The two meeting places, concentric circles, are shown as neurons communicating with each other, representing healthy brain functionality. The yellow stars represent wellbeing and positive thoughts transmitting throughout the mind. This artwork is reproduced with the artist’s permission.



# Foreword



The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) stands on a rich and proud history that began with the establishment of the Australasian Association of Psychiatrists in 1946. We enter our 80th year in 2026 with deep respect for those who have shaped our profession and a clear responsibility to carry that legacy forward. We are the current custodians of the College, entrusted not only with preserving what has been built, but with strengthening and renewing it for the generations of psychiatrists and communities to come.

It is in that spirit that we present this Strategic Plan. It sets a clear direction for the College through to 2030 and reflects both the scale of the challenges before us and the ambition required to meet them. Its development has been thoughtful and deliberate, shaped by extensive consultation across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. We have listened closely to members, staff and stakeholders, and their insights have been invaluable not only in shaping this Strategy, but in guiding the significant reform now underway.

This is not a plan for incremental change. It sets out a deliberate and ambitious program of reform, modernising how we train, support and represent psychiatrists, strengthening our governance and organisational foundations, and positioning the College to play a more influential role in shaping contemporary mental health systems.

At our core, we are an education and training college. The standards we set and uphold shape both the future of the psychiatric profession and the quality and safety of care provided to our communities. That is why reform in this area has been a central focus. We have welcomed the College's first Executive Dean of Education and

established a taskforce to undertake the first comprehensive review and whole-of-program redesign of our Fellowship Program in 15 years. These are significant reforms, and they reflect our determination to ensure the College remains future-ready in how it prepares psychiatrists for modern practice.

The need for reform is reinforced by the environment in which psychiatrists now work. The Australian Government's Psychiatry Supply and Demand Study, released in 2025, confirmed what our members experience every day: a significant and growing gap between the need for mental health care and the availability of psychiatrists and the broader workforce required to provide it. That gap is being felt across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, with serious consequences for access, equity, and the sustainability of care.

Advocacy is therefore central to our purpose. We remain steady, principled, and evidence-informed in speaking for psychiatrists, for high-quality mental health care, and for the communities who depend on it. We have a diverse and growing membership and staff base, and we are committed to being a College that speaks clearly on issues that matter. We will not simply describe the problems facing mental health systems. We will be part of the solution, working with governments, partners and communities to progress the reforms that are urgently needed.

Alongside this, we have been tackling longstanding governance challenges with honesty and intent. We are reimagining a College that is easier to navigate, genuinely member-centred, less bureaucratic, and better equipped to make clear decisions, act with accountability, and engage meaningfully across its structures.

This is essential if we are to be the kind of organisation our members need and our external environment demands.

Our strength depends on our members and staff feeling respected, valued, connected and supported in their day-to-day work. This includes our Fellows, Affiliates and trainees who are the future of our profession. When psychiatrists are thriving, the care they provide to patients, carers and communities is stronger, safer and more effective. We are encouraged by the progress already made, but we are equally clear-eyed about the work ahead. Delivering on this ambition will require sustained effort, disciplined implementation and continued financial responsibility. The Board is united in its commitment to a College that is not only high performing, but also resilient, sustainable and fit for the future.

This Strategic Plan provides an ambitious roadmap to 2030 and beyond. Fully supported by the Board and Executive, it sets out the reform agenda that will guide the next chapter of the College's development. We look forward to sharing that journey with you.

Dr Astha Tomar, President RANZCP

# Our Organisation and Purpose

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists is the professional body responsible for the training, education, and representation of psychiatrists across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The College is accredited by the Australian Medical Council and the Medical Council of New Zealand to deliver specialist medical education, training and continuing professional development.

The College's purpose is:

To lead, connect and be accountable for strengthening psychiatry in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

At its core, the College exists to ensure that psychiatry remains a skilled, trusted and evolving profession, capable of meeting the changing needs of the communities we serve.

We do this by:

- Setting and upholding professional standards that underpin safe, high-quality psychiatric care
- Delivering excellence in education and training, including Fellowship training, examinations and lifelong learning through Continuing Professional Development
- Strengthening a connected and engaged Fellowship, fostering professional identity, belonging, and peer support across all career stages
- Providing leadership and advocacy, using psychiatric expertise to shape policy, influence systems and improve mental health outcomes

- Partnering with communities, including people with lived and living experience, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Māori, to embed cultural safety, equity and accountability in our work
- Advancing research and knowledge, through our journals, the RANZCP Foundation and our contributions to evidence-informed practice
- Supporting psychiatrists in practice, through guidance, standards, position statements and professional resources.

We use our collective voice and influence to:

- Challenge stigma, discrimination, and structural inequities in mental health systems
- Promote culturally safe, inclusive, and equitable care
- Advocate for improved access to high-quality psychiatric care, particularly for communities that are currently underserved.



To deliver on this, the College is committed to being:

- A safe, inclusive, and diverse place to work
- A trusted and independent voice in mental health
- A financially sustainable and future-ready organisation.

The College is both a professional home for psychiatrists and a system leader in mental health care.

# Our Values

Our Values define who we are as a College and how we lead. They guide our decisions, shape our behaviours, and set the standard for how we work with our members, communities and partners.

In all that we do, we are guided by four values:



## Collaboration

We are consultative and listen with humility.

We foster a connected profession and work in partnership across disciplines, systems and communities.

We know that meaningful progress in mental health requires shared responsibility and collective effort.



## Equity

We are committed to fairness, inclusion and cultural safety.

We seek to actively address inequities.

We embed diverse perspectives, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Māori, and people with lived and living experience, across all that we do.



## Integrity and Respect

We act with honesty, transparency and accountability, and uphold dignity and professionalism in all our interactions.

We create environments where people feel safe to speak, to be heard, and to contribute.



## Impact

We translate intent into action.

We are purposeful, responsive and focused on delivering meaningful and measurable improvements in psychiatry and mental health systems.



# Our Current Environment

The College operates within an increasingly complex and demanding mental health landscape. Psychiatrists are working at the intersection of rising demand, growing clinical complexity, workforce constraints, and systems that are often fragmented and under pressure. At the same time, expectations of our profession continue to evolve and require us to respond to advances in knowledge, changing models of care, and the need for culturally safe, equitable and person-centred practice.

These realities shape both the daily experience of psychiatrists and the broader role of the College as a standard setter and system leader. In developing this Strategic Plan, we undertook extensive consultation across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, listening closely to the challenges faced by our members and the communities they serve, as well as the opportunities for reform and renewal. The insights gained have been critical in shaping this Strategy and will continue to guide its implementation.

## The Role of the Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are specialist medical practitioners with expertise in the treatment of mental illness, understood in its broadest sense.

Demand for mental health care continues to grow, while many people face barriers to timely access to psychiatric opinion and care. At the same time, mental health care is becoming more complex, with changing models of care and evolving roles across the wider workforce. In this context, the role of the psychiatrist is also evolving. That evolution must remain grounded in the best interests of the communities we serve and in a clear understanding of the distinctive contribution psychiatry makes.

Whether practising in public or private settings, in metropolitan, regional or rural communities, or in individual practice or large organisations, psychiatrists bring holistic clinical expertise. They integrate biological, psychological, social and cultural perspectives to assess, diagnose, formulate and treat mental illness across the spectrum of need, particularly for people with severe and enduring conditions, and for those with the highest levels of acuity, complexity and risk.

Psychiatrists bring a uniquely medical contribution to mental health care, including expertise in psychopharmacology, the interface between physical and mental illness, and the management of complexity, risk and uncertainty. Their work spans prevention, early intervention, treatment, recovery and rehabilitation, while also supporting the integration of mental and physical health within culturally safe, person-centred care.

Psychiatrists work across a broad range of conditions, including mood, anxiety, psychotic, trauma-related,

eating, developmental and personality disorders, addictions, intellectual disabilities and neurodevelopmental conditions, particularly where comorbidities and complexity are present. They also work at the intersection of mental illness and the broader social realities that shape it, including homelessness, family and domestic violence, and the experiences of people who are marginalised, including through race, displacement, sexual orientation or gender.

Beyond individual care, psychiatrists provide leadership within multidisciplinary teams and across systems, bridging primary, community and tertiary care, supporting continuity of care, and contributing to clinical governance, safety and quality. In these settings, psychiatrists are central not only as expert clinicians, but also as medical leaders who help shape how mental illness is understood, experienced and treated across communities and the systems that serve them. They retain responsibility for complex clinical decision-making, risk management, and the maintenance of standards of care within multidisciplinary systems.

Psychiatrists also play a critical role in education, supervision, research, academic leadership and innovation, supporting the next generation of the workforce, generating evidence, translating it into practice, and helping shape the future of mental health care. They also contribute to service design, policy development and system reform, bringing clinical expertise to decisions that affect the accessibility, safety and effectiveness of mental health care.

## Society

Mental health has become a global focus. Awareness and public acceptance have grown, and an increasing number of organisations are engaged in the mental health sector. Yet stigma and discrimination persist, particularly for those living with severe and complex mental illness. At the same time, the pace of change within the sector is accelerating and placing growing pressure on systems, organisations and psychiatrists to adapt. This is occurring alongside broader societal shifts, including an ageing population, increasing social complexity and persistent inequities in health outcomes for specific communities. Of particular concern is the growing prevalence and complexity of mental health challenges among young people, emerging earlier in life and placing sustained pressure on systems of care. These dynamics are reshaping both the expectations of mental health care and the context in which psychiatry is practised.

## Health systems

Health systems across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, both public and private, are under sustained pressure. Rising demand, constrained access, chronic workforce shortages and ongoing fiscal pressures are placing significant strain on the system's capacity to deliver timely and appropriate care. Funding constraints continue to impact public services, including uncertainty around the availability and expansion of psychiatry training places. At the same time, workforce shortages across the mental health sector are acute, with current and projected shortfalls in psychiatry of particular concern. These challenges are amplified in regional and remote areas, and for specific populations, where gaps in access and outcomes are even more pronounced. Pressures are being felt directly by the workforce. Public psychiatrists are increasingly working in overstretched systems focused on managing severe and complex presentations, often with limited capacity for early intervention or continuity of care. In parallel, private psychiatrists are supporting a growing number of patients whose needs exceed primary care, but who are unable to access public services. In response, there is increasing pressure to identify alternative solutions, including changes to scopes of practice, role substitution, greater use of technology, and reliance on international workforce pipelines. While these approaches may offer part of the solution, they also raise important considerations around quality, safety and continuity of care.

## The College

Medical colleges are facing increasing expectations to reform, and the RANZCP is no exception. We recognise the need to evolve across education and training pathways, assessment and qualification processes, and in how we deliver value to our members. At the same time, we operate in an increasingly competitive environment, including within the Continuing Professional Development landscape, and face growing expectations to remain relevant and influential in advocacy and system leadership. The College also navigates a number of inherent tensions. As a bi-national organisation, we balance priorities across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as across jurisdictions, service settings and communities. We must respond to the needs of both metropolitan and regional and rural populations, and to the realities of practice across public and private sectors. These tensions are not new, but they are becoming more pronounced in a changing environment. We also recognise areas we must strengthen. This includes clarifying our identity and role as a College, deepening our engagement with lived and living experience communities, and addressing perceptions of complexity and bureaucracy. With a diverse membership base, we face the ongoing challenge and responsibility of bringing together a range of perspectives to articulate a clear, credible and unified voice. These challenges present an opportunity. They require us to be more deliberate, more focused, and more accountable in how we lead, engage and deliver for our members and the communities we serve.

# Our Vision

Our Vision is aspirational. It reflects the future we seek for our College, for the psychiatrists we support, and for the communities we serve in improving access to safe, effective and equitable mental health care.

Our Vision defines what we are working towards, grounded in the College’s purpose and strengthened by the role we play as a professional and system leader.

As current custodians of a College shaped over eight decades, we are committed to building on these solid foundations and leaving the College in a stronger position for the next generation of leaders.

Leading the transformation of how mental illness is understood, experienced and treated

## Mental illness

The term “mental illness” is included in our Vision after much deliberation. Psychiatrists are highly qualified specialist doctors who provide expertise, interventions, medications and therapies that help people function with or recover from mental and behavioural disorders, from prevention through to complex acute care. We consider the term “mental illness” in its broadest sense, incorporating the wide range of conditions that affect how a person thinks, feels and behaves.



## The College by 2030

In shaping the future of psychiatry and mental health systems, we must also be clear about the future of our College.

By 2030, we will be a purposeful, responsive and agile College, recognised for our leadership, integrity and the value we deliver to our members and communities.

We will be:

- **Clear in purpose and direction**, setting and holding our strategic course
- **Modern and adaptive**, training and developing compassionate, culturally safe, collaborative and patient-centred psychiatrists for contemporary practice
- **Member centred**, delivering meaningful value across all career stages
- **United in voice**, grounded in evidence and trusted across systems
- **Inclusive and diverse**, reflecting the communities we serve and embracing lived and living experience
- **Culturally safe**, informed by and working in partnership with Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- **A collaborative system leader**, shaping models of care and working across disciplines and sectors
- **Recognised and trusted**, as a leading authority on mental illness and its treatment.

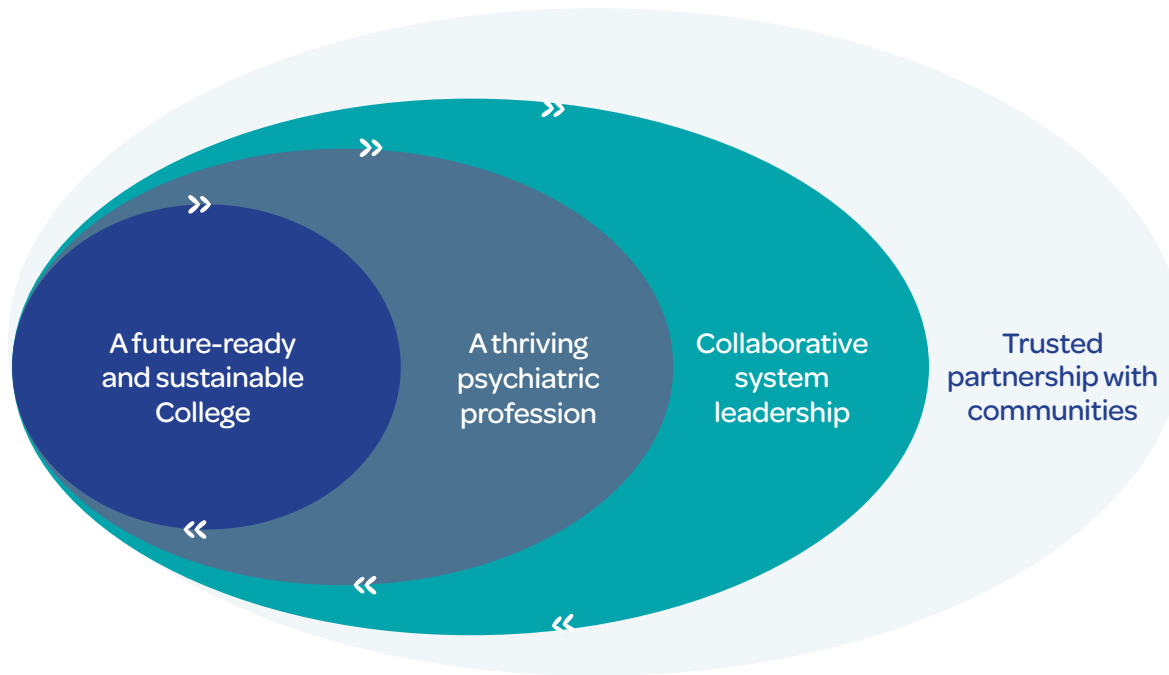
We will be a College that not only supports the profession, but helps shape how mental illness is understood, experienced and treated.

# Our Strategic Priorities

This Strategy is about strengthening the profession, reforming the College, and shaping the systems in which psychiatrists work.

Our priorities are the areas we are focussing on over the next five years and the things we believe will best help achieve our vision as well as enhance our purpose.

To help transform how mental illness is understood, experienced and treated, we are focussing on four priorities:



Across these priorities, the College will deliver a focused program of major reforms to achieve meaningful and sustained impact. These include:

- **Transforming education and training**, including a whole-of-program redesign of the Fellowship Program
- **Strengthening governance and organisational effectiveness**, to enable clearer decision-making, accountability and member value
- **Expanding and sustaining the psychiatry workforce**, aligned to the needs of communities and mental health systems
- **Positioning the College as a system leader**, shaping models of care, policy and workforce strategy.

These reforms will be sequenced and delivered in an integrated manner, recognising dependencies between governance reform, education redesign, workforce strategy and system leadership.

Our priorities are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. A future-ready College enables a thriving profession. A thriving profession strengthens system leadership. Together, these create the foundation for trusted partnerships with the communities we serve.

# Our Strategic Initiatives

Our initiatives are key areas in which we will invest and act to deliver our priorities. These initiatives are underpinned by work detailed in the annual operational plan for the College.

## A future-ready and sustainable College

To deliver on this priority, we will:

1. Build a **professional College** environment, with a focus on member service and value, and where staff are supported and fulfilled.
2. Deliver **governance reform** to strengthen accountability, decision-making and organisational effectiveness.
3. **Modernise systems and processes**, with better use of digital platforms, data and analytics.
4. Diversify income streams and improve **financial sustainability** for long-term impact.

## A thriving psychiatric profession

To deliver on this priority, we will:

1. **Enhance the Fellowship** by fostering a strong sense of belonging, shared professional identity and collective responsibility across all career stages and practice settings.
2. Expand and sustain the **psychiatry workforce pipeline** to meet current and future system demand, with capability and capacity aligned with the needs of mental health systems and those with lived and living experience of mental illness.
3. Strengthen **leadership capability across the career span** by supporting supervision, mentoring and peer connection, and by developing psychiatrists as clinical, educational and system leaders.
4. Modernise **training and assessment frameworks** to be future-ready, fair and fit for contemporary psychiatric practice.
5. Enhance the **health and wellbeing** of our members.

## Collaborative system leadership

To deliver on this priority, we will:

1. Lead and influence **system reform through collaboration** across professions, services and sectors.
2. **Collaborate with government and stakeholders** on medical workforce strategy, as well as strengthening **joint working with regulatory bodies**, other colleges, peak bodies and international colleges of psychiatry.
3. Position the College as a **trusted international leader** in psychiatry and taking responsibility for advancing mental health care across systems beyond Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Trusted partnership with communities

To deliver on this priority, we will:

1. Establish our **social contract with the community**, building public understanding of people experiencing mental illness and the role of a psychiatrist.
2. Work in **partnership with patients, carers, communities, First Nations and lived and living-experience leaders**, embedding co-design principles, shared responsibility and accountability in our advocacy and system engagement.
3. **Challenge stigma and discrimination** by using the College's voice to **promote equity, dignity and safety** in how people living with mental illness, regardless of their background, are treated within health systems and the broader community.

# Implementation

Our Strategy will be delivered through annual operational plans, clear accountability, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Progress will be regularly reviewed by the Board, with adjustments made in response to a dynamic and complex environment.

This Plan sits in an integrated strategic and operational planning framework for the College. Annual operational plans will guide implementation of the Strategic Plan including:

- How each initiative is being prioritised, sequenced and delivered
- Budget and resource requirements
- An implementation matrix outlining roles and responsibilities, risks, system and process redesign, governance, data requirements, and dependencies between initiatives
- Internal accountability and leadership; and
- Regular monitoring by the Board.

Further implementation work is also underway in relation to:

- Defining and developing measures for components of this Strategic Plan and ongoing work around a Theory of Change.
- Reporting, review and evaluation processes.
- The required change management, communication and engagement work both internally and externally.

The College operates in a dynamic strategic landscape with significant complexity. Monitoring and evaluating our progress as we implement the plan, as well as adjusting our focus as required, will be critical.

The Board holds accountability for this over the five-year period. Collective progress against the Strategic Plan will be monitored by the Board at least twice per year.

The successful delivery of this Strategy will require sustained reform effort, disciplined implementation, and a willingness to adapt in a complex and changing environment.

## Our Approach:

Our approach reflects our commitment to working in ways that are relational, culturally grounded and accountable. Our Values define what we stand for, and our Approach defines how we bring them to life.

### Whakarongo (Listen)

We listen with intent, humility and openness, valuing diverse perspectives.

### Mahi Tahi (Act Together)

We work collectively to deliver equitable, culturally safe and effective outcomes.

### Whakawhanaungatanga (Connect)

We build meaningful relationships based on trust, respect and shared purpose.

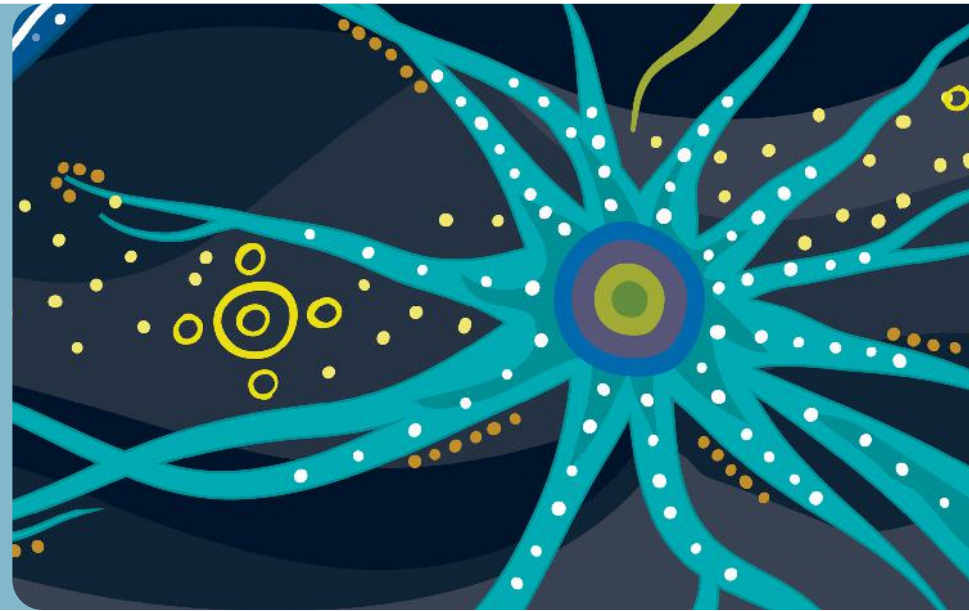
### Arotake (Reflect and Learn)

We reflect, learn and adapt whilst remaining accountable to our members, communities and partners.

Mā te whakarongo, ka whakapāpā  
Mā te pāngia, ka arotake  
Mā te arotake, ka ora!

By listening, we engage  
By taking action, we can evaluate  
By evaluating, we will thrive.





Tō hinengaro  
Tōku hinengaro  
Ka Ora ai  
With your mind  
And my mind  
We will thrive