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### **New data highlights generational impacts of COVID-19 for young Māori**

Tokona Te Raki Māori Futures Collective has partnered with leading business and economic research consultancy BERL to examine and assess the impacts of COVID-19 on Māori. While still a work in progress, early analysis of the data has highlighted rangatahi Māori as among the worst impacted.

“The reality of this pandemic is that the economic impacts of COVID-19 will almost certainly be far worse and more lasting than the health impacts,” says Hillmare Schulze, Chief Economist at BERL. “We estimate that around half of the Māori workforce are employed in industries which will be directly impacted by the response to COVID-19. Drilling down further we estimate that around 75 percent of rangatahi in the workforce currently, will suffer serious negative impacts.”

For Tokona Te Raki Executive Director Dr Eruera Tarena these statistics come as no surprise. “Historically Māori have always borne the brunt of economic shocks – we are always last on and first off – and this is no accident.

“COVID-19 will bring new and uncharted challenges. For Māori and the Māori economy, these challenges will be even more pronounced due to the collective asset base and where the workforce is positioned. Our rangatahi will be a generation disrupted. We have a responsibility to shift our thinking and to find ways to equip them with the skills and experience they will require for the new future world, not the past.”

He believes however that despite the unprecedented impact on the world, New Zealand and the Māori economy, there is a silver lining. COVID-19 presents an enormous opportunity to fix our broken system and to create a more equitable Aotearoa.

“The history of pandemics shows they are transformational, and societies never emerge the same again. Transformation offers the potential to fix our systems and welcome a new and stronger future. Once completed this data will be invaluable in future planning relating to skills, education and the careers of the future.”

Schulze agrees saying that while the data highlights the immediate issues facing rangatahi, it also identifies a new work order which is where attention needs to be focused as we tackle our post-COVID-19 world.

“We know that in the short-term those entry level low skilled jobs such as retail, accommodation and forestry might not be available for rangatahi entering into the job market. The data also shows that young people are more likely to work in those careers at risk of automation. The key learning here though is that while automation results in job losses on one level, at another it creates a whole raft of new ones.

“The future of work is undoubtedly changed forever but from this crisis will emerge a new and better world for our future generations. We do know that what will be critical moving forward will be to take a more individualised approach to work rather than assuming that a single full time job is a one size fits all as we have seen previously. This new mind-set of

taking risk needs to be combined with enterprise skills such as creativity and problem solving.”

Dr Tarena believes a fundamental shift in our education system will be required to make the most of future opportunities and to ensure rangatahi are ready for the future work order.

“We need to re-design the wiring of our economy and education system to deliver equitable outcomes for rangatahi if they are to be empowered and ready to embrace the future. A key focus of this will need to be looking at growing the entrepreneurial skills of rangatahi to empower them to create their own jobs.”

This is particularly important given the young and growing Māori population.

Statistics show the Māori population is growing fast and the prediction is that within a few decades, we can expect that 30 percent of staff in the average workplace will be Māori.

“What we can be sure of is that we won’t be returning to business as usual,” says Schulze. We need to be thinking and acting quickly to stay abreast of the accelerating and intensifying changes happening in our economy if we are to weather the storm and emerge stronger and match fit for the future.”

This project is one of a number currently being undertaken by Tokona Te Raki that focus on the future of work in Aotearoa.

“Our job is to look to the future and to provide useful information to help our whānau and communities to move forward and be match fit to embrace the future. Despite the current crisis, I believe COVID-19 is a huge opportunity to reset our normal – to transform it into a one that offers a far brighter and more equitable world for Māori. This is our moment to raise our gaze as Māori and tell a different story,” says Dr Tarena.

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