

2024 - 2025

YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust

KEY OUTCOMES 2024-25

YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2025



ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF 21 RESTORATION SITES WITHIN THE CATCHMENT



18,711 NATIVE GRASSES, SHRUBS AND TREES PLANTED



1,585 PEOPLE TOOK PART IN COMMUNITY EVENTS



1,600 VOLUNTEER HOURS



69 COMMUNITY EVENTS DELIVERED



282.5 BAGS OF RUBBISH REMOVED BY COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS



521 PEST ANIMALS TRAPPED



181 PEST ANIMAL TRAPS INSTALLED AND SERVICED



ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF FOUR RESTORATION SITES OUTSIDE OF THE CATCHMENT



ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF FOUR FLOOD RESILIENCE SITES



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As I reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the remarkable progress made by the Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust.

In 2024–25, we planted more than 18,700 native grasses, shrubs, and trees across 12 sites, and actively managed 21 restoration sites covering around 50 hectares within the Ōtara catchment. Our work also extended beyond the catchment to Harania Stream, Te Ararata Stream, and Botany Creek. These efforts were complemented by flood resilience actions at four critical stream reaches, reflecting our growing role in climate adaptation and preparedness.

Community involvement remained central to our progress. Over the year, 1,585 people participated in 69 volunteer and community events, contributing nearly 1,600 volunteer hours and helping to remove 282.5 bags of rubbish. Our pest control programme in the Otara-Papatoetoe area expanded to 22 trap lines, resulting in 521 pest animals removed.

Alongside these outcomes, the Trust also continued its role as the umbrella organisation for Pest Free South Auckland and Pest Free Howick. In doing so, we provided governance, coordination, and support to these important community-driven initiatives, enabling them to thrive while remaining distinct in their own identities and impacts.

These results, combined with successful fundraising activities to sustain the Trust's programmes and operations, reflect the scale of what we have achieved.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my gratitude to our supporters, staff, community and volunteers. The journey to restore and protect the Ōtara waterways is long, but this year's outcomes give us confidence that we are moving in the right direction — towards a thriving catchment and flourishing communities.

Nga mihi nui



Tipi Arthur

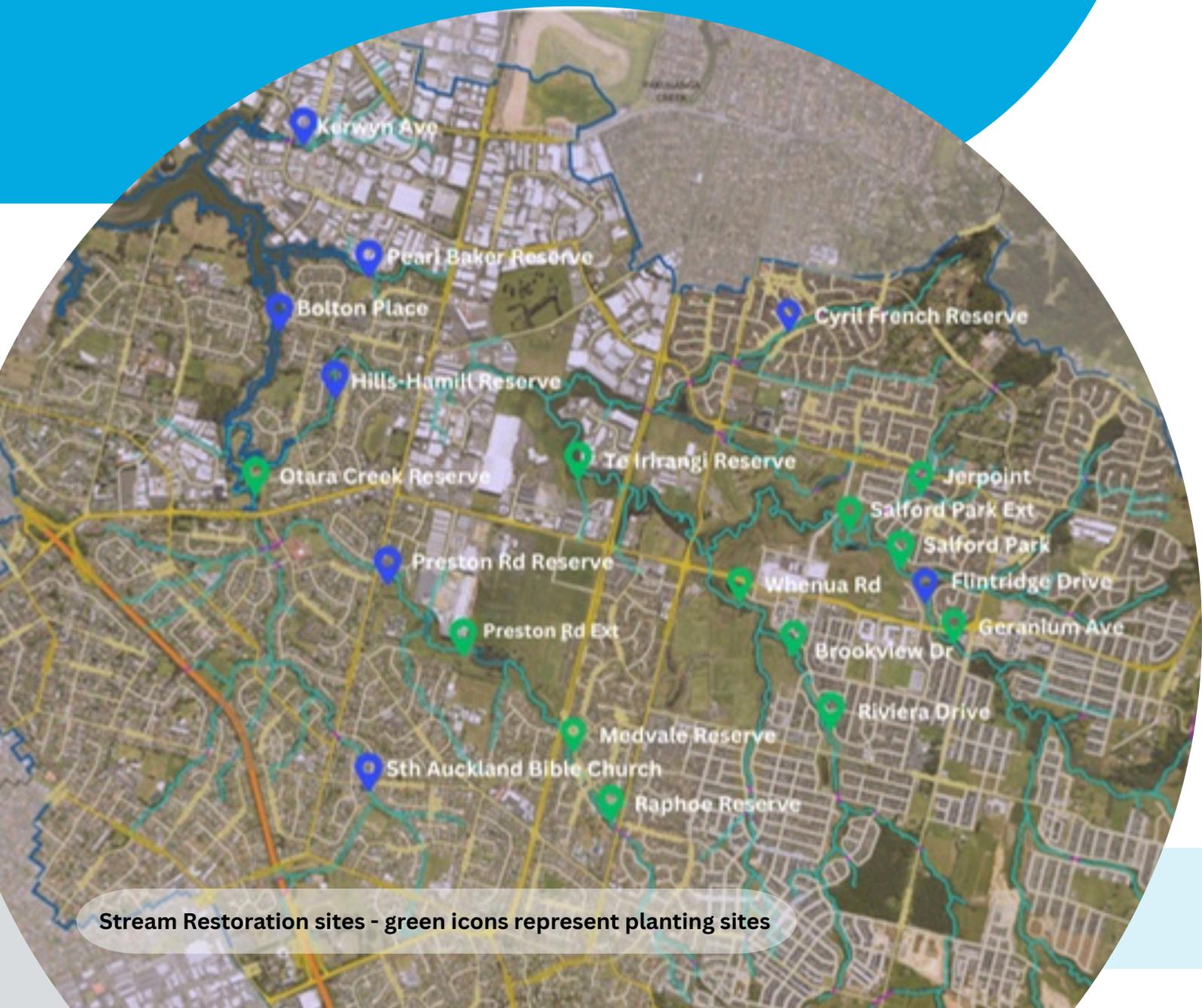
Chair, Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust

STREAM RESTORATION

Within the catchment

In 2024–25, the Trust continued to deliver comprehensive stream restoration work across the Ōtara catchment. Our Stream Team actively managed 21 restoration sites, covering approximately 50 hectares. This included sustained control of invasive weeds such as moth plant, privet, woolly nightshade and tradescantia. Site maintenance also addressed illegal dumping and litter.

Alongside this maintenance, 18,711 native grasses, shrubs, and trees were planted across 12 priority sites, supported by careful preparation of planting areas and ongoing release spraying to give young plants the best chance of survival. Together, this integrated programme of weed control, site care, and planting strengthened streambank stability, reduced erosion risk, created healthier habitats for native wildlife, and increased resilience against flooding.



Stream Restoration sites - green icons represent planting sites



PRESTON RD RESERVE

A stream restoration case study

Since 2021, Preston Road Reserve and Rongomai Park have been a significant restoration site for the Trust in the Otago Papatoetoe Local Board area, transforming degraded wetland and pond margins into a healthier habitat. Supported by Auckland Council's Ecology team, local schools, volunteers, and funding partners, the site shows how long-term care delivers strong ecological and community outcomes.

Progress in 2024–25

This year, more than 3,239 native trees and shrubs, funded by the Auckland Airport Community Trust, were planted near Rongomai School. The Stream Team also carried out targeted weed control — tackling banana passionfruit, moth plant, blue passionflower, and Phoenix palms — along with fertiliser application, release spraying, infill planting and removal of illegal dumping. Volunteers supported hand-release work and plant care, while ongoing liaison with Council set the stage for future planting projects.

Building on Previous Years

Earlier efforts established a strong foundation:

- 2021–22: 5,000 natives planted, with extensive weed and gorse removal.
- 2022–23: 4,050 natives added across infill and new areas, with ongoing weed control.
- 2023–24: 1,750 natives planted as part of a large-scale Matariki planting event, alongside regular maintenance.

Impact

Today, the site is steadily gaining canopy cover, improved streambank stability, and restored native habitat. Ongoing weed control and community involvement are ensuring this important green space becomes both ecologically resilient and valued by local residents

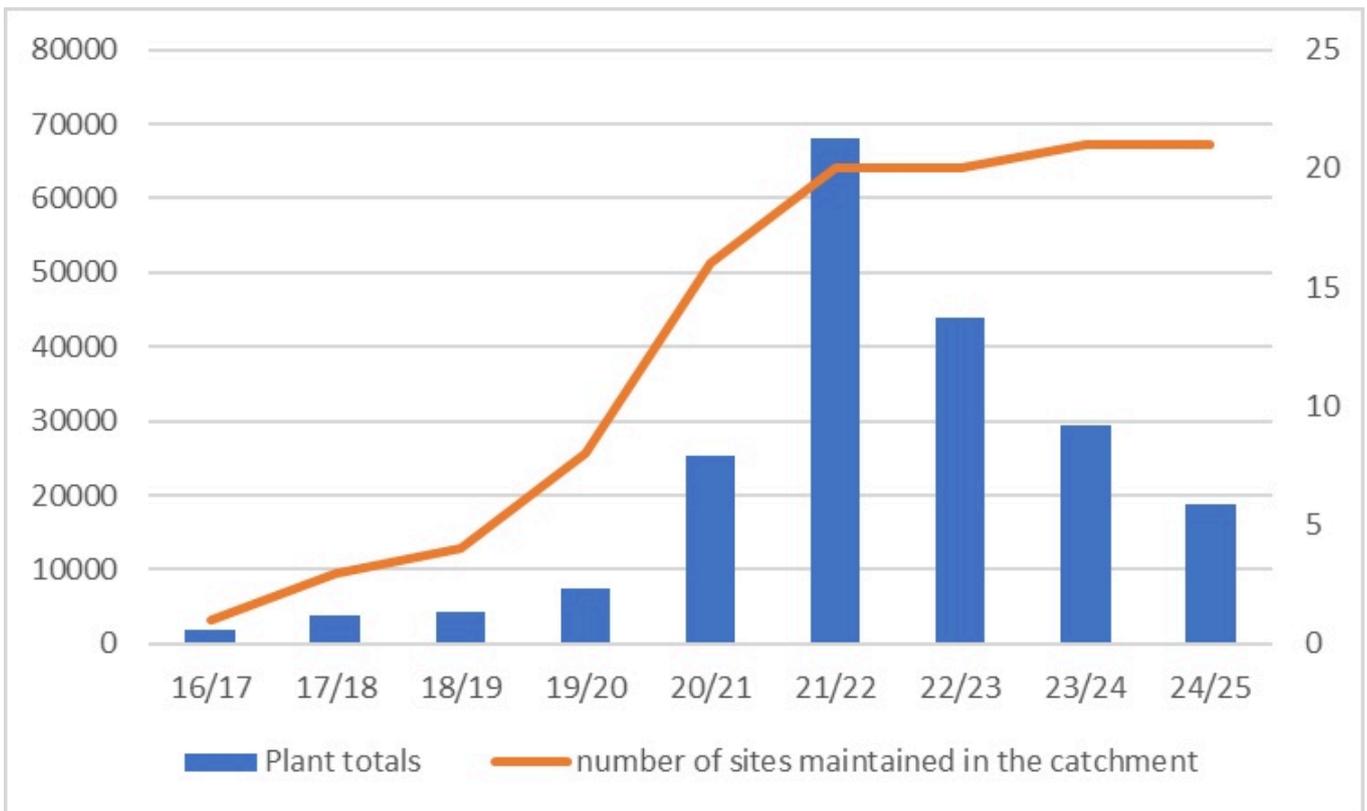


July 2025



June 2023

PLANTING IN REVIEW



The steady growth of the Trust's restoration mahi is reflected in the expansion from a single site in 2016–17 to 21 actively maintained stream restoration sites across the Ōtara catchment today (28 in total when including flood resilience and out-of-catchment projects). Planting peaked in 2021–22 through the One Billion Trees programme, reflecting a major investment in large-scale revegetation. The Trust remains focused on delivering high-quality stream restoration, with an emphasis on plant survival, ongoing care, and long-term ecological benefit — ensuring that the generous funding and support we receive continues to deliver lasting outcomes for the catchment.



Te Irirangi Reserve June 2023



July 2025



Jerpoint Dr, Flat Bush June 2021



June 2023



June 2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community connection and participation are central to the Trust's mission. Through our placed-based engagement programmes in Ōtara, Flat Bush and Botany, and the work of the Kaitakawaenga and Ōtara-Papatoetoe Pest Free team — we create opportunities for people to learn, volunteer, and build a sense of responsibility and care for their local environment. These programmes bring together schools, businesses, community groups and local residents, helping to strengthen both ecological outcomes and community wellbeing.

In 2024–25, the reach of these programmes was significant, reflecting not only the scale of community involvement but also the passion and commitment of local people to restoring and protecting their environment.



**1,585 PEOPLE
TOOK PART IN
EVENTS**

including 824 volunteers and 761 community members attending educational and engagement activities



**1,600 VOLUNTEER
HOURS**



69 EVENTS



**282.5 BAGS OF
RUBBISH REMOVED**

STRENGTHENING CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

The Trust recognises the importance of grounding our work in te ao Māori values. The Kaitakawaenga role was created to guide cultural development, strengthen relationships, and support the Trust to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in practice.

Over the year, the Kaitakawaenga focused on building relationships with local Māori organisations including Ngāti Ōtara Marae, Turehou Māori Wardens, and the Ōtara Kaumatua Kuia Roopu. This included participation in pōwhiri and whakawhanaungatanga activities, and support for culturally grounded community events such as the Matariki Whakamaumahara planting at Ōtara Creek Reserve and the Flat Bush Matariki celebration.

A key milestone was the re-establishment of He Kōtuku, the Trust's Māori advisory group. He Kōtuku provides cultural guidance and supports the Trust to engage appropriately with tangata whenua, hapū, and hāpori Māori.



MATARIKI WHAKAMAUMAHARA PLANTING OTARA CREEK RESERVE

On 19th July 2024, 37 remembrance trees were planted with special engraved stakes provided for each tree. Whanau were then invited to celebrate and remember loved ones over kai



FLAT BUSH MATARIKI PLANTING

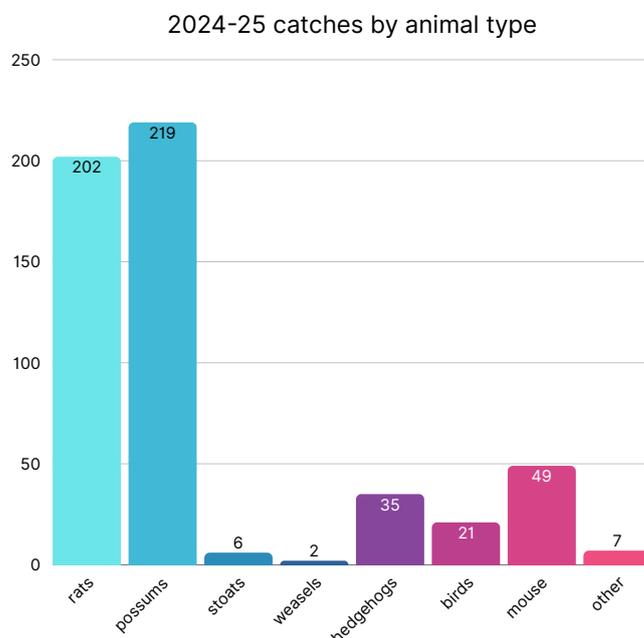
Our second Flat Bush Matariki planting (28 June 2025) was opened with karakia and kōrero from a local kaumātua — helping create cultural connection for the diverse Flat Bush community.

PEST-FREE OTARA-PAPATOETOE

The Pest Free Ōtara-Papatoetoe programme was refreshed in 2024–25 with a stronger focus on managed bait and traplines, while continuing to deliver community education and engagement. The programme aims to reduce mustelids, Norway and ship rats, and possums which are all major threats to birds, reptiles, invertebrates, and native vegetation, so this work is critical to restoring ecological balance.

The programme also integrates pest weed control at selected reserves, creating combined predator and weed management sites to deliver stronger outcomes for biodiversity. Alongside the technical work, community engagement remains a priority: in 2024–25 the team hosted 13 events involving 372 people, including presentations to schools, community groups, and support for private households keen to take up backyard trapping.

Together, these efforts are building momentum towards a predator-free local board area, where native plants and wildlife have the space to recover and flourish.



FLOOD RESILIENCE

The Healthy Waters Community Flood Resilience Programme, part of the Auckland Council Making Space for Water initiative, aims to give water more space to flow safely through neighbourhoods, reducing flood risk and damage to homes. It empowers communities to understand their catchments, supports them to prepare for and prevent future flooding, and builds stronger neighbourhood connections through practical resilience actions. In 2024-25, the Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust received funding to lead this programme in the Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Board area, bringing technical expertise and community engagement together to deliver these outcomes.

Year 0 (2024)

During the pilot phase, the Trust was engaged by Council as the technical lead, supporting local community groups across South Auckland to design and deliver their projects.

Alongside this regional role, the Trust commenced site-based resilience work in Ōtara-Papatoetoe. At Ōtara Creek Reserve, our Stream Team removed wattles and overhanging branches from 150m of stream, followed by remedial planting of 720 natives to stabilise exposed banks. At Papatoetoe High School, weed clearance, rubbish removal, and planting of 500m of stream margins was undertaken, with the involvement of students and neighbours.



Year 1 (2025)

The first full delivery year commenced in early 2025, with three priority sites identified in Ōtara:

- **Papatoetoe High School:** continued removal of blockages and debris, alongside remedial planting and rubbish removal.
- **Kudu-Preston Road** - removal of significant illegal dumping and accumulation of rubbish in the creek, alongside extensive weed control and clearance
- **Blampied:** addressing flood flow constrictions by removing bamboo and willows and stabilising eroding banks with planting.

A dedicated Flood Resilience Coordinator will be appointed later in the year to lead local engagement campaigns and build wider community awareness.



STREAM RESTORATION

Outside of the catchment

While the Trust's primary focus is the Ōtara catchment, we are also engaged by Auckland Council to apply our restoration expertise in other parts of South and East Auckland. In 2024–25 this included projects at Harania and Te Ararata Streams in Māngere and at Botany Creek in Howick.

In Māngere, work focused on weed control, riparian maintenance, debris removal, and preparation of inanga spawning sites, alongside assisting with community engagement.

At Botany Creek, a new Howick Local Board-funded project, invasive weed control was carried out to protect remnant habitats for kōura and banded kōkopu. The project also launched strong local engagement, with signage, letterbox drops, and a guided walk that drew 17 residents keen to volunteer in future.



UMBRELLA ROLE

Pest Free South Auckland and Pest Free Howick

The Trust also provides an umbrella role for two major community-led pest free initiatives — **Pest Free South Auckland** and **Pest Free Howick**. This role reflects our commitment to supporting wider predator and weed control efforts across the region, while ensuring these initiatives retain their own identity and community leadership.

Our support includes governance, financial management, and operational systems, allowing coordinators to focus on community engagement, education, and on-the-ground pest control. By hosting these initiatives, the Trust strengthens their delivery and contributes to a regional effort to reduce pests, increase biodiversity, and create healthier environments.

TRUST NEWS

GOING ELECTRIC TO GET AROUND

The Trust was grateful to receive support from the Meridian Energy Decarbonisation Fund in 2024–25, which enabled us to purchase an LDV e60 electric ute. This investment has significantly increased our fieldwork capacity, allowing the Stream Team to operate as two sub-teams for the first time — meaning we can service more sites, respond faster to maintenance needs, and expand our ability to support community activity across the catchment.

We thank Meridian Energy for its vision and support in helping the Trust transition to low-emissions field operations while continuing to scale our environmental impact.



STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

In late 2024, the Trust undertook its scheduled three-year review of the Strategic Plan, ensuring our direction remains grounded, relevant, and aligned with the needs of the Ōtara catchment.

The updated plan reaffirms the Trust's place-based approach, with all work centred on strategically selected restoration sites and community place-making. It continues to focus on two core themes: restoration led by the Stream Team — improving water quality through planting, pest control, litter removal and flood mitigation — and community place-making through kaimahi initiatives that build local connection, knowledge, and care for waterways.

The new Strategic Plan will guide the Trust's work through to 2028.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

● Revenue ● Expenditure

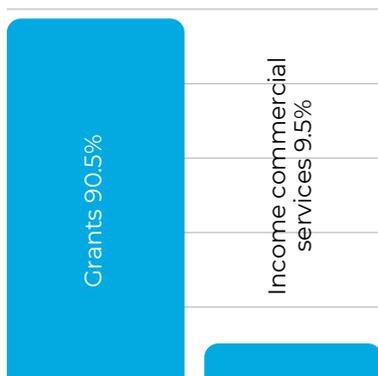
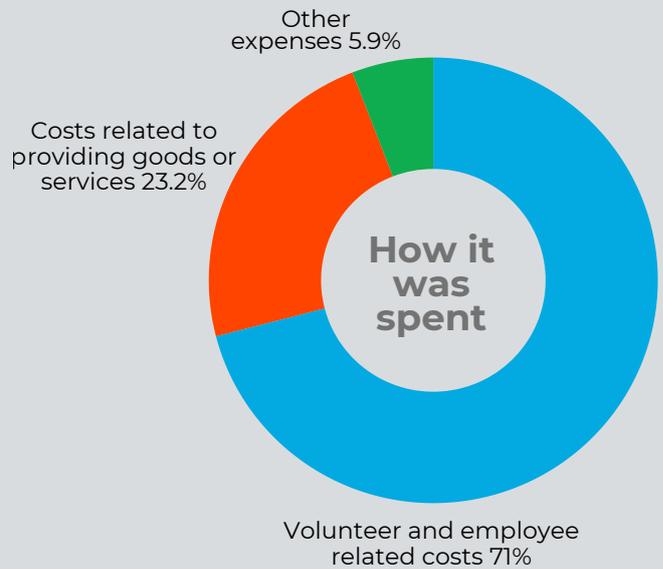
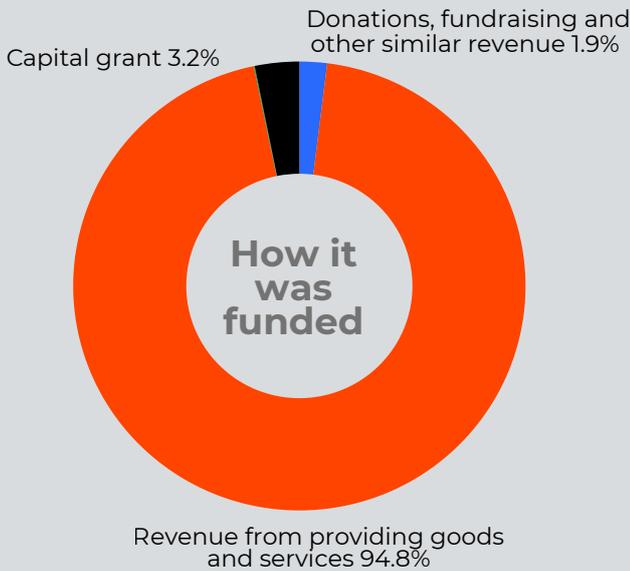
2023-2024



2024-2025



The information in this report has been summarised from the Financial Statements of the Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust for the year ending June 30, 2025. These were prepared by Chester Grey Chartered Accountants and audited by Shingleton Auditors. The audited Financial Statements are available on request or on the New Zealand Charities Commission website. For further information, please email katie@otarawaterways.org.nz.



Breakdown of revenue from providing goods and services



ABOUT US

The Ōtara Waterways and Lake Trust is a community-led organisation dedicated to restoring the mauri of the Ōtara waterways. Since its formation in 2016, the Trust has grown into a leading environmental organisation in South Auckland, combining hands-on ecological restoration with education and community engagement. Through initiatives such as streambank planting, pest and litter control, flood resilience projects, and volunteer programmes, we work alongside local residents, businesses and community groups to reconnect people with their waterways. Our vision — *Te mauri o te rangi; te mauri o te whenua; te mauri ora o Tara* — reflects our belief that everything is connected: when the lake, waterways and wildlife flourish, the people will flourish.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



The Trust would like to make a special mention to Accelerating Aotearoa for its tremendous support of the Trust and in providing a home base for our operations in 2024-25.



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