

MEDIA RELEASE

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Northland Regional Council's Auriole Ruka selected for Indigenous leadership exchange

Northland Regional Council's Auriole Ruka has been selected to participate in the Hononga Indigenous Overseas Manager Exchange to Victoria, Australia.

Overseas Management Exchange recipients were announced at the 2026 LGFA Taituarā Excellence Awards held at Tākina in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington on 18 June 2026.

This is the first time this exchange has been offered, it has been created with support from Hononga Consulting to support and celebrate tangata whenua Māori working in local government, offering a unique opportunity to connect, learn and share experiences with First Nations local government leaders in Victoria, Australia.

This exchange recognises the vital role indigenous leadership and partnerships play in local government decision-making and community outcomes.

Auriole, Group Manager – Strategic Partnerships and Engagement at Northland Regional Council, was recognised for her outstanding leadership and commitment to strengthening iwi and hapū partnerships in local government.

The judges said they were particularly impressed by Auriole's vision for the Indigenous Leadership Exchange and her focus on building enduring relationships between Māori and Indigenous Australians.

“Auriole focused on how such exchanges bring mana to relationships and leadership, reinforcing collective responsibility for change and strengthening the visibility and solidarity of Indigenous leaders,” the judges said.

The judges noted that by placing a strong emphasis on reciprocity, Auriole's participation would help establish enduring connections beyond the exchange itself.

Auriole's leadership in Te Taitokerau has included facilitating iwi and hapū contributions to local government, supporting the establishment of Te Ruarangi, contributing to the development and implementation of Tāiki ē, and creating pathways for Māori employment and leadership within Northland Regional Council. Her wider leadership extends to



significant contributions to her iwi and hapū, wāhine Māori in business and rangatahi through waka ama.

The judges also gave a Poumatau Ka Puāwai recognition to Cassidy Temese, Kaitakawaenga – Iwi Relations Advisor at Ōtorohanga District Council.

This recognises Cassidy as a blossoming leader whose courage, authenticity and commitment are already making a meaningful impact.

The judges said Cassidy has demonstrated strong potential as a navigator for change and a champion for Māori communities, bringing integrity, purpose and a clear sense of values to their leadership. They noted Cassidy leads authentically as Māori, is building a strong foundation of good practice and shows the kind of promise that will continue to flourish with experience, mentorship and opportunities to grow their influence.

“This recognition reflects the strength of Cassidy’s leadership potential for the future, she stands out as a leader to watch,” the judges said.

About the Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange Programme

The Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange Programme provides local government managers with a unique opportunity to focus on their management development and career progression through short-term exchanges with local government counterparts overseas. The programme broadens perspectives, fosters new ideas and strengthens leadership capability across New Zealand’s local government sector.

For more on the 2026 LGFA Taituarā Excellence Awards:

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