



pure kiwi mettle

NEW ZEALAND'S ALUMINIUM SMELTER

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MEDIA STATEMENT

Rio Tinto donates almost half a million dollars to the Southland community in response to COVID-19

Another six Southland community-based organisations have benefitted from \$183,000 worth of donations from Rio Tinto, the majority owner of NZAS.

These donations have been made as part of its COVID-19 relief package, a global programme to support communities as they respond and recover from the many impacts of the virus, and follow the previously announced charitable donations that totalled \$290,000 that were made to Women's Refuge (\$100,000), the Southland Charity Hospital (\$100,000) and Koha Kai (\$90,000).

The final round of funding has been shared by Awarua Runanga (\$50,000), Age Concern (\$38,000), Southland Loss and Grief Centre (\$35,000), St John Ambulance (\$30,000), Youthline (\$25,000) and Bluff School (\$5000).

COVID-19 has impacted economies across the globe including in Southland said NZAS Acting General Manager John Tatkovic. "We know there are people who are finding it tough and we're hoping these donations will help people get through and go some way toward building even greater resilience in our community."

The donation to Awarua Runanga is supporting programmes at Te Rau Aroha Marae to build family and cultural resilience, and enhance the ongoing wellbeing of the Bluff community.

The \$50,000 donation is giving families 'grow and cook' training, with the aim of addressing food security concerns by teaching people how to grow their own vegetables and cook healthy meals. The fund is also providing short-term immediate food supplies to families impacted by job losses, enabling advanced preparedness plans with PPE (personal protection equipment) being bought and stored at the marae in case of another COVID-19 outbreak in the community.

"This is a really important project that provides food knowledge for families and is having a ripple effect across the Bluff community," said Mr Tatkovic.

Bluff School is using the funding by giving breakfast and lunch to students who could otherwise go hungry and has purchased Chromebooks for school use and remote learning.

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Age Concern is undertaking a major renovation of their centre and has used the funds to install new windows, an automatic door at the main entrance, an air conditioning unit in the kitchen, and to replace the carpet.

The Southland Loss and Grief Centre is using the money to provide subsidised or free counselling to those who have suffered loss and grief and are unable to pay due to financial hardship.

Southland can remain in good heart as St John has equipped another frontline ambulance with a state of the art Lifepak 15 defibrillator and charger.

Mr Tatkovic acknowledged the particular impact of COVID on our young people; “We know lock downs have been especially tough on our young people and now Youthline is able to train an additional five volunteers to ‘go solo’ on the phone and has also set up a leadership programme in Invercargill schools to help students manage stress, support friends and build confidence.”

“All of these organisations are doing an amazing job in our community and we are very proud to be able to support the great work they are doing,” he said.

ENDS

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