

News Release

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Business embracing kaupapa Māori

Speaking te reo and understanding tikanga Māori is important to ANZ New Zealand's Acting CEO Antonia Watson, who recently started one-on-one te reo lessons with Precious Clark, founder of Te Kaa.

"I get nervous speaking te reo Māori. I'm nervous I'll get it wrong and potentially cause offence," Antonia says.

"But it's important for me to try and for me to keep practising because it's a matter of respect."

Since stepping into ANZ's Acting CEO role Antonia has taken the opportunity to evaluate what's important to the bank, its employees and customers. And culture has been top of mind.

"Supporting Māori people, culture and principles is important to us but now we're asking ourselves how can we be doing more?"

"I've asked Precious Clark and her team to work with us to ensure we embrace tikanga Māori in a meaningful and respectful way, that we engage with Māori communities appropriately, and we create an environment where Māori staff can flourish."

ANZ New Zealand's leadership team will also take part in Te Kaa's Māori cultural competency programme aimed at establishing a baseline of knowledge and understanding within the organisation directly from the top.

Precious Clark, who founded Te Kaa in 2016, says when leaders place value on culture it sends a strong message to their workforce.

"It's courageous when a leader becomes an ambassador and allows things like bi-culturalism and Māori culture enter into the workplace. Someone like Antonia taking leadership in this space is absolutely vital," Precious says.

"Meaningful cultural change can only come through a transformational process. Leaders have to feel the culture, you have to feel the people in order to lead the organisation into a new state."

While there is a strong network of Māori staff represented at many levels across ANZ Antonia acknowledges more can be done.

"I don't see enough Māori in leadership positions within ANZ. I've found myself wondering if we are providing the right cultural context for people to be comfortable moving up the organisation," Antonia says.

"This is important for me and for the future of ANZ, no matter where I end up."

ANZ started offering te reo Māori as a language option on all ATMs across the bank's New Zealand network in 2017. In 2018 ANZ hosted free te reo classes for customers, staff and the public for Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori.

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