

Helen Leahy is the Pouārahi / Chief Executive of Te Pūtahitanga o Te Waipounamu; the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency for the South Island. Helen returned to the South Island in 2015 after 25 years in Wellington.

For the previous fifteen years Helen was based at Parliament in Wellington, in her roles as Chief of Staff of the Māori Party, and Senior Ministerial Advisor for Dame Hon Tariana Turia. She was National Secretary for the Māori Party from its establishment in 2004 to 2014; and the author of ‘Crossing the Floor: the story of Tariana Turia’ (2015).

Helen was a member of the Expert Advisory Panel for the modernisation of Child, Youth and Family in 2015, and the Māori Design Team for Oranga Tamariki. She is also a member of the South Island Hauora Alliance and the national Disability Supports System Transformation working group. She is a member of the governance forum for the Canterbury Children’s Team; as well as a champion of the family violence initiative, Tū Pono: Te Mana Kaha o Te Whānau.

Helen is a trustee on the board of PILLARS – Positive Futures for Children of Prisoners; and a trustee for Digital Wings; a Trust which facilitates the redistribution of electronic equipment from corporate entities to community organisations to enhance educational and employment opportunities.

In 2017 Helen was awarded the Dame Tariana Turia award by Te Rau Matatini, for her contribution to Whānau Ora and whānau-centred practice.

Helen and Deana have three children: Te Puawai (21), Pisivalu (19); Rangipunehu (10) and one mokopuna, Hine Te Kohurangi (18 months).