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For immediate release

One ear out when you're out and about

Roimata Hansen's grandson's life may have been saved if he'd kept one headphone out while out on a morning run.

Roimata, an Outpatients' Clinic Coordinator for Waitemata DHB's Whanau Centre, lost her 16-year-old grandson Keenan Matthes in April 2017 when he was tragically struck by a train near his home in Ranui. He was so focused on his run with music blaring in both ears that he failed to stop, look up and listen to warnings of the level crossing.

Keenan's family are advocating the *One Ear Out* campaign to highlight the risk of wearing headphones while walking down the street, crossing the road or level crossing, driving a vehicle or cycling.

"Many of us have seen near-misses involving people wearing headphones, people who haven't taken the time to look up and be aware of their surroundings," says Karamea, Keenan's mother.

The *One Ear Out* campaign was started in the US by a father whose daughter was hit and killed by a train while wearing noise-cancelling headphones.

"It would be wrong of us not to push the awareness and safety message to schools for our kids and into the wider community," Karamea says.

"If it was one of Keenan's school mates, friends or family who had been in an accident like this, Keenan would have been out there championing the cause. He was that kind of boy."

Roimata and the Matthes whanau are working with Auckland Transport and TrackSafe to formulate better safety measures for pedestrians at level crossings and train stations. They would like to see audible warning alarms, lights and self-closing gates to stop pedestrians accidentally walking onto train tracks.

Waitemata DHB CEO Dr Dale Bramley says it's important for Waitemata DHB to get in behind the campaign with Auckland Transport to raise awareness.

"The passing of Kennan Matthes was an absolute tragedy. We hope that raising awareness of this campaign will help people stay safe when they are out doing activities around busy roads and railways."

Go to <http://www.oneearout.org/> and <http://www.tracksafe.co.nz/> for more information.

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