

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī



6 October 2025

Taranaki VTM Project Expert Panel
C/- Environmental Protection Authority
Email: substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou,

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī: Invitation to comment in relation to the Taranaki VTM proposal

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī acknowledges and appreciates the invitation from the Expert Panel to comment on the Taranaki VTM project.

Te Kāhui Tupua and Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī

Earlier this year, new legislation was passed in relation to Taranaki Maunga: Te Ture Whakatupua mō Te Kāhui Tupua 2025 (Taranaki Maunga Collective Redress Act 2025) (**Te Kāhui Tupua Act**).

The Te Kāhui Tupua Act implements the agreement reached between the eight iwi of Taranaki and the Crown in 'Te Ruruku Pūtakerongo' (the collective redress deed) signed between those parties on 1 September 2023 following more than 9 years of negotiation.

The Te Kāhui Tupua Act establishes a significant new framework in relation to 'Te Kāhui Tupua' which is recognised in the legislation as follows:¹

Te Kāhui Tupua is a living and indivisible whole comprising Taranaki Maunga and other tūpuna maunga, including Pouākai and Kaitake, from their peaks to, and including, all the surrounding lands, and incorporating all their physical and metaphysical elements.

Te Kāhui Tupua is also recognised as a legal person with all of the rights, powers, duties, responsibilities and liabilities of a legal person.²

The Te Kāhui Tupua Act includes an acknowledgement of Te Iho Tāngaengae, which is the statement by Ngā Iwi o Taranaki of their cultural, spiritual, historical, and traditional association with their tūpuna maunga and Te Kāhui Tupua, as set out in section 3 of that Act. That includes the following statement:

¹ Section 17(1) of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

² Section 18(1) of Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

The maunga are the essence of this region having shaped the physical landscape with volcanic activity, inclining slopes, expansive plains and rocky shores. They have shaped the very character of weather, wind, rainfall and climate. They have been the source of unceasing artesian waters, mineral deposits and are a rich store of high altitude biodiversity. These maunga are not simply a part of the Taranaki environment they are its synthesis.

The Te Kāhui Tupua Act also sets out 'Ngā Pou Whakatupua' (Maunga values) which are intrinsic values that represent the essence of Te Kāhui Tupua and are intended to reflect the cultural, spiritual, ancestral, and historical relationship between Ngā Iwi o Taranaki and Te Kāhui Tupua.³

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is established by the legislation as the human face and voice of Te Kāhui Tupua and to act and speak for and on behalf of, and in the name of, Te Kāhui Tupua.⁴ Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is comprised of four members appointed by Ngā Iwi o Taranaki and four members appointed by the Crown.⁵ Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is in the establishment and induction phase and is preparing for its first formal meetings.

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Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī has standing to participate in public processes relating to or affecting Te Kāhui Tupua under any legislation.⁶

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is yet to have its first formal meeting, but given the timing of this invitation to comment, it wishes to provide the following preliminary feedback to the Expert Panel:

- It is not contested that the iron sands originally derive from Te Kāhui Tupua.
- The iron sands are inextricably connected to Te Kāhui Tupua.
- The application documentation does not refer to the Te Kāhui Tupua Act or arrangements which creates an information gap for the Expert Panel in terms of its obligation under section 7 of the Fast-track approvals Act 2024 (FTAA) to act consistently with Treaty settlements (and the requirement to decline inconsistent applications under section 85(1)(b) of the FTAA).
- Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī would like to make more detailed comments on the application and recommends that the Expert Panel holds a hearing to provide for that opportunity and to ensure that it is fully informed.
- In the meantime, Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is concerned that removing the iron sands that derive from Te Kāhui Tupua in the scale and manner proposed is inconsistent with the intent and principles of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act and Te Ruruku Pūtakerongo.
- Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī also strongly supports the position taken by Ngā Iwi o Taranaki, whose relationship with Te Kāhui Tupua is recognised in the legislation as being fundamental to the Te Kāhui Tupua framework.⁷

³ Section 19 of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

⁴ Section 28 and 29(a) of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

⁵ Section 31(1) of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

⁶ Section 53(2) and (3) of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

⁷ Sections 3 and 15 of the Te Kāhui Tupua Act.

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī is happy to provide the Expert Panel with further information if that would assist.

Noho ora mai



Chair

Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī