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### MINUTE 9 OF THE EXPERT PANEL

Response to Applicant's Memorandum of 8 May 2026 on Hui Arrangements  
Central and Southern Block Mining Project [FTAA-2512-1153]

(13 May 2026)

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- [1] This Minute responds to matters raised by the Applicant in its Memorandum of 8 May 2026 in relation to the Panel's proposal for a hui and to appoint Mr Julian Williams as mātanga (cultural expert).
- [2] The Memorandum addresses the following issues:
- a. The omission of Taharoa C from the parties notified of Panel minutes, in particular Minute 7 (proposed appointment of Mr Williams, his scope of work and dates for proposed hui);
  - b. The independence of Mr Williams for his mātanga role and the scope of his work including the details of the proposed hui;
  - c. The EPA Regional Hui at Te Kooraha Marae on Saturday 2 May 2026.

#### THE OMISSION OF TAHAROA C FROM NOTIFICATION

- [3] The Panel apologises for the omission of Taharoa C from direct notification of Panel minutes. While it is apparent that Taharoa C has been receiving information contained in Panel minutes from the Applicant, it is more appropriate for Taharoa C to be notified directly and the Panel have directed the EPA to ensure that is the case from this point forward. Such notification acknowledges Taharoa C's important position as the landowner of the subject site of the mine and as kaitiaki for approximately 2200 Māori landowner shareholders, as recorded in the Applicant's 8 May Memorandum.

#### INDEPENDENCE OF MR WILLIAMS AND THE SCOPE OF HIS WORK

- [4] The appointment of Mr Williams as mātanga for the Panel has received the support of the Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation and Te Nehenehenui. No response has been received from Te Whakakitenga o

Waikato Incorporated (Waikato -Tainui). The Applicant has not opposed the appointment and has acknowledged that Mr Williams is suitably qualified and experienced for the role.

- [5] The Applicant has also raised the matter of any affiliations and conflicts of interest that Mr Williams might have with the parties involved with the application. The Panel is committed to a fair and transparent process and will consider any such affiliation and conflicts declared by Mr Williams prior to confirming his appointment.
- [6] The scope of work for Mr Williams was expressed in general terms in Minute 7 as providing advice on tikanga Māori and Treaty settlement frameworks. Within that general scope there is a significant focus on establishing the detailed arrangements for the hui through engagement with mana whenua (as recorded in Minute 7). These arrangements encompass all the matters referred to in the Applicant's Memorandum (including purpose, location, timing, attendees, and the manner in which presentations are to be made). For the avoidance of doubt, Mr Williams will be consulting with all parties on these matters, including Taharoa C, and the Panel had intended that within the scope of work, as noted above. The requested opportunity for the Applicant to respond to any matters raised in the hui is noted and will of course be provided for in an appropriate way (again, on advice from Mr Williams).
- [7] The Panel appreciates the logistical challenges likely faced by all parties in convening this hui within the timeframes available for completing its functions, but remains of the view that the hui is appropriate, and necessary, for the reasons recorded in the Panel Convenor's Minute 3.

#### **EPA REGIONAL HUI AT TE KOORAH MARE**

- [8] As the Memorandum notes, this hui, held on 2 May 2026, was part of the EPA's Te Herenga national initiative. The EPA initiative is an entirely separate process to the Central and Southern Block Mining Project for which the Panel is engaged. The events at the hui have no bearing on the Panel's decision-making.



Dave Serjeant

**Central and Southern Block Mining Project Expert Panel Chair**