



ĀTIAWA KI WHAKARONGOTAI

Cultural Expert Caucusing — Shortened Oral Version

Karakia

Pāpaki tū ana ngā tai o Whakarongotai,
he tai pari, he tai timu.
Kia rongo mai te mauri.
Ko te mauri nā wai?
Ko te mauri o Rongomaraeroa,
ko te mauri o tēnei atua.
He toi tipua, he toi whakapapa.
Kia oho te mauri o te tai,
koia te mauri o te tai,
o te awa, o te tai whenua.

Ārahina mātou i ngā huringa o te wā.
Kia ū, kia kaha, kia māia.
Kia toitū te orange tangata,
kia tau te rangimārie.
Hui e! Tāiki e!

We draw our senses to the
crashing waves on the
seashore
Tis the flow of the receding
and inward rising tide
Alas the essence of the
forces awakens.
Behold Rongo of the long
house
Tis the mighty power of the
ancient ones.
The spiritual source, the
chiefly ones,
The astute people of these
kin ...

Tēnā koutou e te Pae,
tēnā koutou katoa kua hui mai nei mō tēnei kaupapa whakahirahira.

Ka mihi ki a koutou mō te wāhi kua tukuna mai kia whakatakotoria ngā whakaaro me ngā
wawata o Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai mō tēnei whenua.

He mihi hoki ki ngā mātanga, ki ngā kaitohutohu me ngā tāngata katoa kua whakapau
kaha ki tēnei kaupapa.

Heoi anō, me tū au ki roto i tōku ake whakapapa.

Ka rere atu au i te motutere o Kāpiti,
ki Tararua te pae maunga.
Mai ngā ia o Waikanae e rere nei,
ka whati mai ngā ngaru ki uta.

Ko Te Kakakura te rangatira ki Whakarongotai.

Ko Whakarongotai e here nei i ōku raukura.

Ko Helena Gerretzen Parata ahau.

Ko au te Heamana o Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Part One — Our Cultural Position

Whakarongo ki ngā tai e kōrero ana.

Listen to the tides.

I began with our karakia deliberately, because within those words sit the things I want us to hold in this room today:

Te tai. Te awa. Te whenua. Te whakapapa. Te mauri.

And importantly:

Ngā huringa o te wā — the changes that come with time.

For generations, Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai have looked to these tides.

The tide moves.

The river moves.

The sand moves.

The wai moves above and beneath the whenua.

The manu move between island, coast, river and ranges.

And through all of that movement there is whakapapa.

There is relationship.

There is life.

Ko Whakarongotai te manawa o te iwi.

When we say **Whakarongo ki ngā tai e kōrero ana — listen to what the tides are telling us** — it describes how we understand our responsibility as mana whenua.

We listen.

We observe.

We remember.

We learn from what has gone before.

And then we act for those who are still to come.

That is the cultural lens I bring to this caucusing.

I am not here simply to identify individual cultural effects associated with a development.

I am here to speak about the relationship between an iwi and its ancestral landscape.

For us, this whenua is not an assemblage of environmental features.

It is a living cultural landscape.

It is onepū.

Repo.

Wai.

Awa.

Takutai.

Te Moana-o-Raukawa.

It is Kāpiti before us and Tararua behind us.

It is ngā manu travelling between them.

And it is generations of our people who have lived within, travelled through, gathered from and cared for this landscape.

I also want to acknowledge **Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki** and the relationship we share in this kaupapa.

I speak from my own whakapapa and from the responsibilities I carry for Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai. I do not presume to speak for Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, just as they do not speak for us.

But we do not need to speak for one another in order to stand together.

Our whakapapa are distinct. Our mana remains our own.

But we share a commitment to the health of the whenua and wai, and a responsibility to ensure that development strengthens rather than diminishes the ability of mana whenua to exercise kaitiakitanga.

We do not speak for each other, but we can speak together.

The wellbeing of the whenua requires us to work together.

When I stand upon the onepū and look towards Kāpiti, I do not see an empty landscape awaiting development.

I see whakapapa.

**Piki ake i te onepū
Tirohanga takutai e
Ko te matangi
Mai te ngākau tonu
A Tangaroa e**

**Mahea ināiane
Nā te pūangiangi
Putā mai te moutere
Kapiti e
Kaumoana
I ngā ngaru māriri e**

**Kahe Rau o Te Rangi
Taku toa e
Kau ana ki tōu tau
i te ia o te moana**

**I mahuki te aurere
o Waipunahau e
Ngaro atu, toromi
Te tangata pakari e
Raukawa Moana e**

**Kawea te wairua
E tohorā ūwha e
Whakaahuru kautere
Hei tohu koea
Mō āu uri e**

Those dunes matter.

They are remnants of an ancient coastal system.

The ecological evidence tells us that indigenous vegetation associated with stable sand dunes is a **naturally uncommon ecosystem**.

So even through a western ecological lens we are being told:

This is uncommon.

This is vulnerable.

This matters.

But our mātauranga tells us something more.

The dunes cannot be understood separately from the wai.

The dune forms have helped determine how water moves across this coastal plain. Between them lie the repo, wet hollows, waterways and connections beneath the whenua that we cannot always see.

This is a system.

Te Harakeke.

Peka Peka Road Swamp.

The remaining dune systems.

The waterways.

The hydrological connections between them.

And they matter because so much else has already been lost.

Wetlands have been drained.

Dunes modified.

Waterways altered.

Indigenous vegetation diminished.

Systems that once functioned together have become fragmented.

And I want to make this cultural proposition very clearly:

Cumulative loss does not diminish the significance of what remains. It magnifies it.

These remaining places are not simply remnants of what has been lost.

They are the foundations from which regeneration can begin.

For Te Ātiawa, our aspiration is not simply preservation.

It is **regeneration**.

Whakahoki te mauri — returning life.

Our responsibility as kaitiaki is not fulfilled if, fifty years from now, we can point to a fenced wetland and say, *we managed to keep that*.

We must ask:

Is it alive?

Is the wai healthy?

Are the repo flourishing?

Are the dunes regenerating?

Are the connections stronger?

Are our manu returning?

Has the mauri strengthened?

Ki uta ki tai

This is why **Waikanae ki uta ki tai** matters.

Wai travels through whenua, above and below ground, through wetlands and waterways, into the Waikanae, the estuary and Te Moana-o-Raukawa.

The health of the moana is connected to the awa.

The awa to the repo.

The repo to the wai.

And the wai to the dune landscape through which it moves.

We can divide this landscape into hydrology, ecology, stormwater, earthworks and cultural values for assessment purposes.

But Papatūānuku does not organise herself according to our technical reports.

The wai does not stop at the boundary of the hydrologist's evidence.

The manu do not recognise the edge of an assessment area.

And whakapapa does not stop at a cadastral boundary.

The whenua operates as a whole.

Our response must therefore address the whole.

Ngā manu

And then there are **ngā manu**.

Look west — **Kāpiti**.

Look east — **Tararua**.

Between them lies this coastal landscape of dunes, repo, waterways, awa and indigenous vegetation.

Imagine if we stopped seeing these remaining natural areas simply as places to be protected and saw them instead as the beginnings of **reconnection**.

A restored repo becomes habitat.

Regenerated dune vegetation becomes habitat.

A naturalised waterway becomes habitat.

Indigenous planting becomes a stepping stone.

The Waikanae River becomes a pathway.

Could this landscape contribute to strengthening the ecological connection between Kāpiti, the coastal plain and towards Tararua?

Could our mokopuna stand here fifty years from now and hear a richer manu chorus than we hear today?

For me, that is cultural redress.

The return of our manu is part of the return of the mauri.

And that is why we must be unequivocal about predators.

We cannot promise restoration with one hand and introduce a threat to that restoration with the other.

If we restore habitat for manu, we must make that habitat safe.

That is why a **no-cat requirement** is not peripheral. It is integral to the cultural and ecological outcome we seek.

Alienation and cultural redress

There is another matter I need to name explicitly.

Alienation.

The history of this landscape is also a history of the progressive alienation of Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai from our whenua.

And alienation is not simply loss of legal title.

It occurs when our people can no longer access the places where our tūpuna lived and gathered.

It occurs when repo are drained, waterways altered and dunes removed, and with them the relationships and practices connecting our people to those places.

It occurs when decisions about ancestral whenua are increasingly made by others and mana whenua are left responding rather than helping determine its future.

And perhaps most importantly:

Alienation occurs when our mokopuna inherit a landscape in which their whakapapa remains, but their ability to live that whakapapa has been diminished.

We cannot continue to lose the physical places through which whakapapa is expressed and assume that naming, interpretation or consultation adequately addresses that loss.

Our relationship with whenua requires whenua.

Our relationship with wai requires healthy wai.

Mahinga kai requires places where mahinga kai can occur.

And kaitiakitanga requires more than responsibility.

It requires access.

Authority.

Capability.

And enduring relationship.

That is why the return of whenua matters.

The proposed return of Peka Peka Road Swamp and the Dune Hilltop has the potential to be more than the transfer of two parcels of land.

It has the potential to interrupt a history of alienation.

To move in another direction.

But we do not seek the return of isolated ecological remnants surrounded by a system over which we have little influence.

We seek the restoration of relationship.

Between people and whenua.

Between dunes and repo.

Between wai and awa.

Between Kāpiti and Tararua.

Between tūpuna and mokopuna.

That is what I mean by **cultural redress**.

It cannot simply be Māori names, artwork or interpretation.

Those things have a place.

But they are not a substitute for rangatiratanga.

Cultural redress must leave something tangible behind:

Whenua.

Healthy wai.

Living repo.

Regenerating dunes.

Returning manu.

Kaitiaki monitoring.

Governance and ownership pathways.

And the capability and resources necessary to sustain these responsibilities across generations.

Our strategic direction is **tūpuna inspired and mokopuna focused.**

Ko ngā mokopuna te pae tawhiti.

Our mokopuna are the distant horizon towards which we navigate.

So I want this caucusing to be courageous.

The transformation proposed for this whenua is significant.

Our response should also be significant.

Instead of asking only, *what is the minimum required to enable this development?*, I want us to ask:

What can this development give back?

What can be restored?

What can be reconnected?

What can be returned?

What can be regenerated?

Part Two — Response to WNDL Minute 9

Having established that cultural position, I want to respond directly to the Minute 9 response from Waikanae North Developments.

First, I acknowledge there has been movement.

The proposed transfer of Peka Peka Road Swamp and the Dune Hilltop Site, restored at WNDL's cost before transfer, is significant.

So too are the proposed kaitiaki role, mahinga kai access, cultural narrative and naming, and restoration measures.

We acknowledge that progress.

But acknowledgement of progress does not mean the cultural issues are resolved.

WNDL says that the values, interests and concerns in the cultural assessments have been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated through the masterplan, technical design and proposed conditions.

I want to make an important distinction.

Incorporation is not the same as resolution.

Consultation is not the same as rangatiratanga.

And providing an opportunity for input is not necessarily the same as providing an enduring role in decisions affecting the health of our whenua and wai.

There is a difference between integrating our words into a development and integrating our worldview into its future.

The test is not how many times our CIA can be traced through technical documentation.

The test is what happens on the whenua.

If Peka Peka Road Swamp and the Dune Hilltop are transferred, that is significant.

But if the hydrology around them changes, if ecological connections weaken, and if urbanisation introduces new pressures, then we must ask:

What exactly has been returned?

Resilience is not a property of an isolated wetland.

It is a property of the system.

We do not want to inherit isolated remnants.

We want to restore a living system.

WNDL also proposes that management plans be provided to iwi for review and input, with reasons given where input is not accepted.

That is movement.

But we need to distinguish between:

input and influence.

Kaitiakitanga is not simply the right to submit comments on somebody else's management plan.

It is an enduring responsibility to the mauri of the taiao.

So we need to be clear.

Where are mana whenua consulted?

Where do we participate?

Where are decisions genuinely shared?

Where do we have an enduring monitoring role?

And where should mana whenua cultural authority carry greater weight?

We also need to recognise relationships **between mana whenua.**

Partnership cannot simply become separate consultation pathways between the developer and individual iwi entities.

There will be places where our respective mana must be recognised distinctly.

And there will be places where **Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai and Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki need to work together in the interests of the whenua.**

We do not speak for each other, but we can speak together.

Nor should mātauranga Māori be reduced to advice at a planning table.

Give it life on the whenua.

Restoration is where kaitiakitanga is practised.

Where our nursery capability can grow.

Where mahinga kai can be restored.

Where rangatahi can learn alongside kaumātua and practitioners.

Where mātauranga passes between generations.

Cultural redress should therefore build the capability of mana whenua to participate directly in restoration, monitoring and long-term care.

I also want to respond to WNDL's characterisation of matters including **ownership and governance as broader aspirations.**

I understand there are legal questions about the scope of conditions. Those can be addressed by those with the appropriate expertise.

But culturally, and against the history of alienation I have described:

I cannot regard ownership and governance simply as broader aspirations.

For us, they are part of the question of whether this development perpetuates alienation or begins to reverse it.

If these repo, dunes, waterways and ecological systems are to flourish over generations, then we must ask:

Who holds responsibility?

Who exercises authority?

Who receives the monitoring information?

Who can intervene when outcomes are not being achieved?

Who is resourced to do that work?

And who will still be here doing it in fifty or a hundred years?

Those are not peripheral questions.

They are expressions of kaitiakitanga and rangatiratanga.

And ultimately, twenty years from now, I do not want the measure of success to be simply that every condition was technically complied with.

I want to know:

Is the wai healthier?

Are the repo flourishing?

Are the dunes regenerating?

Are tuna, inanga and piharau moving through connected freshwater systems?

Are our manu returning?

Can our people practise mahinga kai?

Are mana whenua actively exercising kaitiakitanga?

And when something begins to fail, do we have the authority, information, capability and resources to respond?

Because:

Compliance is not the same as wellbeing.

That is why I do not want us to negotiate away the opportunity for cultural redress **one condition at a time.**

First, we must agree on the cultural outcome.

Then we test whether the conditions are strong enough to deliver it.

The conditions are the mechanism.

The restoration of mauri is the outcome.

The Cultural Landscape Management Plan is the mechanism.

A living, interconnected cultural landscape is the outcome.

Kaitiaki monitoring is the mechanism.

The active exercise of kaitiakitanga is the outcome.

Restoration planting is the mechanism.

The return of indigenous life is the outcome.

A no-cat requirement is the mechanism.

The protection and return of ngā manu is the outcome.

And governance and ownership arrangements must help us answer how:

rangatiratanga endures beyond the life of this consent.

Whakakapi

And so I return to where I began.

Whakarongo ki ngā tai e kōrero ana.

The tides remind us that landscapes change.

But change does not have to mean loss.

E kore te tai e hoki whakamuri.

The tide does not turn backwards.

We cannot recreate every part of the landscape our tūpuna knew.

But we can decide the direction we travel from here.

We can continue to fragment.

We can simply protect what remains.

Or we can begin the long work of reconnection and regeneration.

I want our mokopuna to stand upon these dunes.

To look towards Kāpiti.

To turn towards Tararua.

To see living repo.

To see indigenous vegetation returning across the onepū.

To see healthy wai moving through the landscape.

To hear the manu returning.

And to know these places are cared for by mana whenua — Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai working alongside Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, each standing firmly in our own mana and whakapapa, but working together where the wellbeing of the whenua calls us to do so.

Because ultimately:

The wai flows.

The manu move.

The mauri connects us.

I want our mokopuna to know that when this whenua stood at a crossroads, those who sat around this table were courageous enough to look beyond mitigation.

We chose regeneration.

We chose to return something.

We chose to reconnect what had been fragmented.

We chose to interrupt the long history of alienation.

And we chose to leave the relationship between tangata and whenua stronger than we found it.

Kia hoki mai te mauri.

Kia hoki mai ngā manu.

Kia ora anō ngā repo me ngā wai.

Kia tupu anō te ora.

Kia manawa anō te whenua.

Let the mauri return.

Let the manu return.

Let the wetlands and waters live again.

Let life flourish again.

Let the whenua breathe again.

