

Waitangi Tribunal

Media Statement



Saturday 26 June 2010

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.00AM TODAY

WAITANGI TRIBUNAL RELEASES ITS REPORT ON WAIRAPAPA KI TARARUA CLAIMS

The Waitangi Tribunal has today released its report on the Treaty claims of iwi and hapū of the Wairarapa ki Tararua district, which extends up the eastern side of the North Island from Cape Palliser to southern Hawke's Bay. The principal iwi are Ngāti Kahungunu and Rangitāne.

The Tribunal inquiry panel comprised Judge Carrie Wainwright (Presiding Officer), Professor Wharehuia Milroy, Dame Margaret Bazley and Professor Ranginui Walker, assisted as consulting historian by Tribunal member Dr Robyn Anderson.

In its report, the Tribunal finds that Crown acts and omissions in this district constituted serious breaches of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. In the nineteenth century the Crown purchased too much Māori land too quickly and without regard to the inevitable plight of a Māori population left virtually landless in a part of the country where agricultural enterprise was the principal route to a good livelihood. The Tribunal further urges that Māori rights in and around Wairarapa Moana be recognised and given effect.

The Tribunal considers that there is not enough muscle in the legislation governing the relationship between tangata whenua and local and central authorities to enable Māori here to make their views count to an extent that is at all appropriate in Treaty terms. As a result, Māori find it difficult to exercise any meaningful influence over what goes on in their own locality.

The Tribunal is concerned that many important Māori heritage sites, some of international significance, are vulnerable and that the current regime for their recognition and protection is inadequate.

The Tribunal notes that it has not observed any Government response to its recommendations, first released in July 2009, for changes to the public works regime removing the legislative power to acquire Māori land compulsorily for public works. It expresses the hope that this area of policy will soon get the attention it has so long been denied.

The Tribunal considers that Māori of this region have been sorely tested over a long period. Their small population and early colonisation left them struggling to assert their mana and identity in the face of a Pākehā majority that soon owned most of the land, made all of the decisions, and did not value Māori culture or language.

The Tribunal is concerned that te reo Māori has reached a very low ebb in this area. Māori language tuition is not easily accessible to most and is not even available to all Māori children. Improved access and more resources are necessary if the Crown is to make amends for the wrongs of the past.

The Tribunal records its strong impression of an improvement in the historically difficult relationship between the two tribes of this region, Ngāti Kahungunu and Rangitāne, during the course of the inquiry. It expresses the hope that this will set the scene for a successful negotiated resolution of the Treaty breaches documented in its report.

– ENDS –

FOR ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES, CONTACT:

**Steve Corbett
Senior Public Adviser – Media
Public Information Team**

**Phone: 04 918 8836
Email: steve.corbett@justice.govt.nz**