

For Immediate Release
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Te Arawa backs Tribunal's freshwater recommendations

Te Arawa Lakes Trust (TALT) has added its backing to the Iwi Leaders Group, supporting the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal report on National Freshwater and Geothermal Resources.

The Tribunal has made a number of significant recommendations that would see decisions on the protection, use and restoration of freshwater bodies more effectively shared with relevant iwi.

In particular, the report says:

- Māori rights and interests in fresh water need to be addressed
- Māori values have not been reflected in freshwater decision-making
- Māori participation in freshwater management and decision-making needs to be enhanced
- the under-resourcing for participation needs to be addressed
- Māori rights in fresh water have an economic dimension

The Tribunal has recommended the establishment of a national co-governance body for freshwater, along with significant changes to the Resource Management Act, and an integrated partnership with Māori to co-design for relevant policy-making.

TALT Chairman, Tā Toby Curtis says the Tribunal's recommendations are long overdue.

"We have a fundamental interest in seeing iwi and hapū water management issues resolved. We have consistently engaged with the Crown, either directly or via the Iwi Chairs Forum, to ensure our settlement is durable and that our rights and interests are provided for," says Mr Curtis.

"However, to date, the Crown has not addressed these interests and this Waitangi Tribunal report highlights that the Crown must now recognise proprietary rights for iwi."

Te Arawa Lakes Trust is responsible for the sustainable management of 14 lakes within the wider Rotorua region, including Lake Rotorua and Lake Rotoiti.

The lakebeds were returned to Te Arawa under the 2006 Te Arawa Lakes Settlement Act, with the Trust established in 2007 to manage its assets.

Today, it undertakes a range of its own projects to help protect and restore the lakes, while it also works in partnership with other agencies to achieve better water quality outcomes.

Trust chief executive, Karen Vercoe says if the report's recommendations are adopted, then Te Arawa could have greater involvement in determining the parameters of Te Mana o te Wai as decision makers – rather than simply being consulted as stakeholders.

"This could also mean that Councils and all water users – including Māori – in the rohe could be required to monitor the health and wellbeing of our lakes under Te Arawa Te Tuapapa values framework.

"In turn, we would be able to increasingly utilise the skills and experience of our hapū and iwi to help deliver restoration projects in partnership with our local communities – as we are doing now through the successful Catfish Volunteer programme.



“All of this would help ensure a wider ‘world view’ of our freshwater, which would ultimately ensure better outcomes for everyone involved. In particular, it would mean looking beyond our environmental mandate, and considering wider social, cultural and economic values.”

Mr Curtis says that as a member of the Iwi Chairs Forum, Te Arawa Lakes Trust will continue to work collectively to see the Tribunal recommendations addressed by the Crown.

“While discussions around freshwater management have continued over the past 12 years, since the initial claim was filed by the New Zealand Māori Council, we have continued to uphold our historic and current responsibilities to our lakes. This is despite an ongoing imbalance in legislation over Māori freshwater decision-making.

“Te Arawa want the lakes to be restored to their former health and bounty, and the Trust has been working with Te Arawa – and the wider community – to achieve this. I hope the Crown will recognise the wisdom of the Tribunal’s recommendations and act swiftly to uphold them.”

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Contact:

Jacky James
Phone: 021 577 871