

Position on Iwi Māori Partnership

Key Points

- The Government's 'one size fits all' model does not reflect local realities and communities of interest and, importantly, iwi and hapū rohe and areas of interest.
- We believe any arrangements will be more effective if they reflect common local interests, decision-making and build on existing relationships.
- We actively seek to initiate authentic discussions with mana whenua at a local level that consider co-design and partnership arrangements that acknowledge and enable Te Tiriti based pathways at a local and regional level.
- We seek a pause so we can have more time to work on a way forward that works for everyone.

Detail

The Government's decision to mandate the Three Waters Reform was disappointing to most Councils in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ninety percent of Councils submitted their opposition to the Government's four entity model.

The Government did not respond to this opposition, nor the significant negative public reaction, and continued with their plans to mandate the implementation of this model.

In response, some concerned Councils got together and developed a Memorandum of Understanding in order to better work together on an alternative way to effect change.

We formed Communities 4 Local Democracy He hapori mō te Manapori (C4LD) which now has 31 partner Councils representing over 1.4 million New Zealanders and is growing.

We are providing a constructive voice for the majority of Aotearoa New Zealand with real concerns about this reform and the rush with which it is being imposed on our communities.

There are 10 specific things we agree on and that we stand for, three of which are:

- Better drinking water and environmental outcomes are essential
- Proper and effective regulation and an independent regulator
- Partnering with mana whenua and co-designing a governance framework locally and regionally

Overall, we stand for fresh ideas for better water for everyone.

All our members value the importance of developing strong and meaningful partnerships with Iwi Māori for the future of 3 Waters.

We do not, nor believe we should, have a fixed view on how we would best achieve this.

We do know that a 'one size fits all' solution simply will not work for anyone.

The Government's proposal will not reflect local realities and communities of interest and, importantly, iwi and hapū rohe and areas of interest.

Any arrangements will be more effective if they reflect common local interests, decision-making and build on existing relationships.

We actively seek to initiate authentic discussions with mana whenua at a local level that consider co-design and partnership arrangements that acknowledge and enable Te Tiriti based pathways at a local and regional level.

The concept of Te Mana o te Wai reflects the paramount importance of the wai. In particular it is about restoring and preserving the balance between te wai, te taiao, and nga tāngata.

The guidance provided by Te Mana o te Wai delivered with local knowledge will help us better respond to current challenges and realise future opportunities to achieve objectives that are shared by all communities.

Together as a community we can tackle the pressing issues of water quality, water security, sustainable economic growth and development, resilience and climate change mitigation and/or adaptation, and to do this in a way that also respects shared values.

Our primary undertaking, therefore, must be to care for water.

The next step is to consider how we make decisions in partnership, in the best interests of our water in a holistic sense. Seeing Three Waters Reform through this lens is an attractive kaupapa.

It is unfortunate that the Government and Department of Internal Affairs did not consider and discuss the proposed Three Waters Reform on this basis.

This is complex work, and our members have continually underlined the importance of Government providing sufficient time to work through this. It is worth noting that in most cases, partner Councils already had workstreams under way that were leading us in the direction of change.

We have an opportunity to turn this around.

To do this we are seeking a pause so we can have more time to work on a way forward that works for everyone. A vital part of this is developing a true partnership with mana whenua with hui and kōrero about how we best achieve this.

Rushed and forced reform is in no-one's interest. For such significant reform it is imperative that this is done in partnership and with the consent of both the sector and Iwi Māori.

We support a bipartisan political approach so that changes brought about by these reforms endure. There is a commitment from all partner Councils to achieve this. Without bipartisan support there is a high risk that the changes proposed by the Government will not survive future changes of government.

We have particularly focused our attention on two models which we believe will achieve a more durable approach, and also ensure greater involvement for mana whenua than is presently being offered by the Government - essentially a panel that appoints the board, and a guiding document "Mana Whakahono ā Rohe". We acknowledge the working group has recommended some changes but in our view those recommendations fall short of what is required to achieve broad support.

We would value the opportunity to discuss this further with mana whenua and seek to create opportunities to do so. We all are also supportive of a greater involvement for mana whenua with the new Water Regulator, Taumata Arowai.

We are aware there are those who would benefit by discrediting our group or by misrepresenting our values and aims.

Our group are committed to genuine partnership with mana whenua and a reform proposal that is durable, widely-supported and fit for purpose.

We represent a significant percentage of the local government sector and over 1.4m people.

We are genuine in our desire to work in partnership with Iwi Māori and would welcome discussion on these matters and opportunities for clarification.

We want to make it clear:


- Iwi partnership and relationships are critical and important to us, and any suggestion otherwise is simply not correct
- All partner Councils have relationships with their mana whenua at a local level and these are highly valued
- We strongly support giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai

C4LD formed just 12 weeks ago, and we accept there is a lot more work for us to do, including furthering authentic conversations and discussions with mana whenua. While there have been attempts to do this, we are very clear that more work is needed – work that we are committed to doing.

We believe a less rushed process would have allowed the creation of an appropriate governance in a co-design process with mana whenua. This outcome can still be achieved.

We want to know what success looks like for mana whenua and how we can work collectively, collaboratively and in partnership to achieve better outcomes for all our communities.

Ngā mihi



Mayor Helen Worboys
Chair



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