IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL **Wai 3327**
I TE RŌPŪ WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI **Wai 1684**

In the Matter	of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975
And	
In the Matter	of the Te Reo in the Public Sector Urgent Inquiry (Wai 3327)
And	
In the Matter	of a claim by Doreen Puru, Anna Kahukura Hotere, the late Louie Katene, William Puru and Emma Torckler, on behalf of themselves, Te Hoia, Ngāti Rangimatakaka and Ngāti Rangimatamomoe (Wai 1684)

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF EMMA TORCKLER

DATED 13 MAY 2024

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Waitangi Tribunal
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WELLINGTON

MAY IT PLEASE THE TRIBUNAL

I, Emma Torckler, Retired, of Ngāruawahia, say:

INTRODUCTION

Ko Whangaroa te moana
Ko Mamaru te waka
Ko Mangawhero te awa
Ko Taratara te maunga
Ko Mangawhero te kainga tuturu
Ko Otangaroa te marae, te teina
Ko Te Aroha te tuakana tawhito
Ko Ngati Rangimatamomoe te hapu
Ko Rangi Tukariri te tupuna
E moe ia ko Wirihia Tiro he wahine hoa rangatira
Ka puta ko Kahupara
E moe ia ko Victor Clarence Green
Ka puta ko Kathleen
E moe ia ko Wiremu Te Waru Puru
Ka puta ahau, Emma Puru.

1. My name is Emma Torckler. I am one of the named claimants of Wai 1684. I am providing this evidence in support of our claim for the Wai 3327: Te Reo in the Public Sector Urgent Inquiry.

2. I was born in Auckland in 1958. I am now 66 years old and retired, living with my husband, Graeme Torckler in our home in Ngaruawahia. We have four children, three of whom now live in Australia, and we have four grandchildren ranging in age from 7 to 25. Graeme and I had a few businesses in our working years which now means we can do what we want in our older years.

TE REO MĀORI IS A VEHICLE FOR CONNECTION

3. I grew up in Te Atatu North. I was the 13th child of 14 and grew up closely with all my siblings. We were an urbanised, working-class family with only

our parents speaking te reo Māori. My father worked on the wharf, and mother worked in the laundry of Carrington Hospital. Whenever my father met other Māori men, they were either his cousin or mum's cousins, or his father's 'people'. We were never introduced to their children, so we only knew them from school as schoolmates.

4. When I was growing up, I only ever heard te reo Māori when my parents spoke. They were both native speakers but were determined that none of their children would speak te reo, due to hidings their children used to get at school. So, they never taught us. Out of all siblings, only the older ones were able to speak a spattering of te reo Māori but at least understood it comprehensively.

5. Te reo Māori wasn't spoken at school in my day, and we Māori were looked down on. It was sometimes the things they – the teachers, the students – said. Sometimes, it was the dismissiveness of our culture and language. Te reo Māori was hardly ever seen or heard in public spaces, that's for sure. Not like today.

6. Te reo Māori wasn't important to me when I was growing up, although I loved hearing my parents speak te reo Māori. Also on the odd occasion, our parents had to go to a tangi and take us, I heard it then and it was a whole different world to me. A world that I didn't really know or understand. I only knew we were Māori, and that a lot of the families we grew up with were Māori. I had a lot of other mates who weren't Māori and they were not interested in Māori culture at all.

7. As I grew older and lived my own life, I started to see things change toward Māori. My parents passed away and the need to know my Māori side grew stronger. I had no idea everything Māori was right in front of me. It was only after I lost my parents, and losing the chance to know our Māori side, that I started looking. By this time, it was the 1970s. Public protests about the Treaty of Waitangi, Bastion Point, land protests and te reo Māori were just starting to prick my conscience.

8. All of these were foreign to me, but once I saw these things being more in

the public eye, I started to explore or land rights and learning te reo Māori. Speaking te reo Māori was for the older people and for some reason, we always thought it would be taught to us at some stage so we could speak te reo when we were old.

9. There are very few of my siblings who are fluent speakers. I think only one sister now, who tries to teach us. I tried to speak te reo but I never had the natural pronunciation. However, I continue to learn and speak what little I do know, at home or with my grandchildren. Although I am not a fluent speaker, being able to use te reo Māori in every day conversation gives me a connection to my tupuna and my parents. I connect to my culture and my people, and it gives me the ability to leave something for my grandchildren.

THE MANA OF TE REO MĀORI: SMALL ACTS DO GREAT THINGS

10. I am aware that this current Coalition Government is taking steps to diminish the mana of te reo Māori, and in doing so, invisiblising or deprioritising te reo Māori in the public in general.

11. This is so disappointing, given the history of te reo Māori, both in my life and the lives of many others. For example, having the correct Māori pronunciation during weather reports, exposure to the television channel Waka Huia, listening to Māori radio stations, seeing, and hearing Māori being spoken on the bus, trains, and planes, is life changing.

12. I understand that this inquiry is focussed on te reo Māori in the public sector and that has a very narrow scope. But te reo Māori everywhere is essential. It is much more essential for those in charge – the people at the top who are supposed to be representing Aotearoa – to be doing the same. Regrettably, the closest interaction I have with any government department is to pay bills, and they normally greet me with kia ora, so I can't comment any deeper than that.

13. But I do want to let the Tribunal know that one simple act like saying "kia ora" is enough for me to feel how valuable it is for government staff to use and have te reo Māori in their everyday communications. For some people it may be the only interaction te reo Māori they ever have. It also shows that

the government is accepting not only of te reo Māori, but they are accepting of us as people, our culture, our language and identity. It brings acceptance of things 'te ao Māori' into our lives that aren't our homes or our marae.

MORE TO BE DONE BY THE GOVERNMENT TO EMPOWER USE OF TE REO MĀORI

14. Removing te reo Māori from the public sector will set us Māori back more than 100 years, undo countless years of work by past and present kaumatua and kuia, and rob our future generations of their taonga tuku iho. We are just now starting to see the fruits of Kohanga Reo. They are a strong generation that will produce stronger speakers of te reo Māori in the future. This will bring about a stronger culture for our mokopuna. Maybe that's what this Coalition Government is afraid of.

15. Removing te reo Māori in the public sector – how can that be good? It is not. Te reo Māori must be spoken, heard and seen to acknowledge past mahi by those who fought and are gone, acknowledge grievances, and repair damage that was done to Māori.

16. There is always more that can be done to enhance te reo Māori by government departments. I know these seem obvious, but it is the little changes that make the biggest impact in my view. I provide here a small number of examples:

    a. Staff should be encouraged to meet, greet and farewell people in te reo Māori;

    b. Government department waiting rooms – such as at WINZ – should have books (both children's picture books and adult literature) in te reo Māori available to encourage reading Māori;

    c. Bilingual signage where the ingoa Māori is prominent, for public toilets, libraries, and people-facing government offices, etc.;

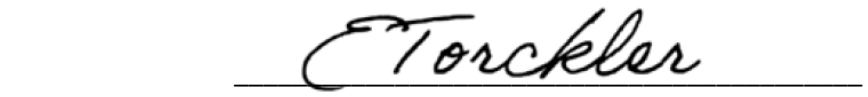
    d. Playing Māori music while people wait on long queues on the phone, or doing quick Māori lessons or offering history 'bites' about Te Tiriti o Waitangi during waiting times that are taking more than 10 minutes.

17. Some government departments may already be doing these, but there is always more to be done. The small amount of te reo Māori must NOT be removed from the public sector by this Coalition Government.

18. If the Crown were to really stand behind the fact that te reo is a taonga – not just for Māori but to the unique identity of Aotearoa – then it needs to keep te reo Māori prominent across its government departments, including and especially Māori staff with cultural and language proficiency who are doing all the ground work to foster an environment where te reo Māori is embraced by the government.

19. While I don't have great aspirations to become a great orator, I do have aspirations for te reo Māori to survive. So, my mokopuna and their mokopuna, at least, will know they have their own language that spanned space and time for generations and generations, before and after they were born.

Dated at Ngāruawahia this 13th day of May 2024



Emma Torckler
A Named Claimant of Wai 1684