OFFICIAL

IN THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

Wai 2700
Wai 3012

IN THE MATTER OF the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND

IN THE MATTER OF the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry

BY Moerangi Potiki, on behalf of herself and her whānau, and hapū and iwi of Ngāti Whakaue mai Maketū

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF TERE TAPSELL

12 February 2026

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Mai Maketu Ki Tongariro - From Maketu to Tongariro

Ko Te Arawa Te Waka- Te Arawa the canoe

Ko Te Arawa Mangai-Nui Upoko- Tutakitaki - Te Arawa the determined people

I, **Tere Tapsell,** Managing Director, of Rotorua, state:

1. My whakapapa reaches back more than 30 generations to the captain of the Te Arawa waka. Here I recount the first 8 rangatira lines:

- **a.** Tamatekapua;
- **b.** Kahumatamomoe;
- **c.** Tawakemoetahanga;
- **d.** Uenukukumairarotonga;
- **e.** Rangitihi;
- **f.** Tuhourangi;
- **g.** Uenukukopako; and
- **h.** Whakaue.

2. My profession spans a long career with more than 50 years as a tradesman, entrepreneur and adventurer. I am a retired business owner with a lifetime commitment to Te Arawa development as a former Te Arawa Lakes Trustee and Taiao Manager.

3. I provide this Brief of Evidence ("BoE") in support of the Wai 3012 Claim, filed by Ms. Moerangi Potiki.[1]

4. I give this evidence to demonstrate the Crown's failure to meet its obligations under te Tiriti o Waitangi ("te Tiriti") to actively recognise, uphold, and protect the rangatiratanga and Tikanga of wāhine Māori, and to illustrate the resulting and ongoing prejudice experienced by our whānau and hapū.

5. My evidence speaks to Issue 1 of this Inquiry's Statement of Issues.[2] For completeness, it is as follows:

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[1] Wai 3012, #1.1.1.
[2] Wai 2700, #1.4.004.

What are the Crown's duties and obligations under te Tiriti/the Treaty concerning the exercise of rangatiratanga and Tikanga by wāhine Māori in relation to their status, roles, responsibilities, practices, values, and beliefs?

6. This BoE is provided in the context of the management and leadership of Te Rūnanga o Maketū ("Te Rūnanga"), with particular focus on the contributions of Maria Horne ("Ms. Horne") and Roana Bennett. Ms. Horne served as Manager of Te Rūnanga until her sudden passing in 2019, and her leadership was central to the advancement of mana wāhine kaupapa and the operational integrity of the organisation.

7. Following Ms. Horne's passing, Moerangi Potiki, who grew up in Maketū and has long served as a community representative and advocate for the rohe, assumed the role of Chairperson of Te Rūnanga o Maketū. Moerangi's leadership has guided iwi and community engagement on matters of kaitiakitanga for the taiao, hauora, and intergenerational sustainability, grounded in service to the collective and the strengthening of kaupapa. In this period of transition, Roana Bennett stepped into a senior leadership role supporting Te Rūnanga as Manager.

Moerangi Potiki

8. My kōrero affirms that the trauma inflicted upon our wāhine tūpuna through Crown actions and omissions is not confined to the past but continues to be carried within our whānau in the present day.

9. Together as a hapū, our evidence demonstrates the depth, continuity, and ongoing nature of this harm, and underscores the urgency of meaningful recognition of, and redress for, the Crown's failures.

B: MANA WĀHINE AND TINO RANGATIRATANGA

10. Through my upbringing and lived experience, particularly observing my parents, grandparents, and wider whānau, I have seen wāhine, especially our kuia, exercise strength, authority, and leadership as a natural and respected part of our social order.

11. Within Te Arawa, strong wāhine leadership is not unusual or exceptional. It is recognised and relied upon.

12. This respect for wāhine does not diminish the role of tāne, but reflects a balance grounded in Tikanga Māori, where the mana, knowledge, and decision-making roles of wāhine Māori are integral to the wellbeing and continuity of our people.

13. My tupuna, Ngātai, exemplifies the qualities of a wāhine rangatira. As a woman bestowed with significant responsibilities with whenua interests and authority following the death of her father, Tohi Te Ururangi, Ngātai upheld her role for her people. Her ability to give evidence in the Native Land Court, to manage and dispose of land in accordance with collective priorities, and to reinvest those resources into the establishment of Whakaue Marae at Māketū reflects leadership grounded in foresight, service to community, and cultural continuity.[3]

14. These qualities of a Mana Wāhine and a commitment to collective wellbeing, are not confined to the past. They form a whakapapa of leadership that continues to be expressed by wāhine today, whose roles and responsibilities remain central to the exercise of rangatiratanga within whānau, hapū, and iwi.

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[3] Sherwood Young, '*Tapsell, Ngātai Tohi Te Ururangi and Tapsell, Retireti'*, Dictionary of New Zealand Biography (first published 1993), Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/128686/sources (accessed 5 February 2026).

Maria Horne

15. Maria Horne was the former Manager of Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whakaue mai Maketū. She was a Matekino from the Horne Family in Maketū and an uri from Ngāti Whakaue and Ngāti Whakahemo.

16. I came to know Ms. Horne through my position on the Te Arawa Lakes Trust ("the Trust"), formerly the Te Arawa Māori Trust Board, where I stood as a Ngāti Whakaue representative for twelve years. The Trust holds approximately 85 percent of the land interests within Māketū, including multiple land blocks held solely and jointly with other shareholders.

17. From an early stage, Ms. Horne recognised the importance of maintaining a strong working relationship, and therefore our relationship was grounded in shared responsibilities relating to land, resources, and iwi wellbeing.

18. I observed that Ms. Horne was deeply committed to the betterment of her iwi and consistently went beyond the formal expectations of her role. She actively sought engagement, convened meetings in Māketū, and collaborated closely with me and others to tackle complex issues such as the Rena disaster cleanup, the Wetlands project, and the development of sustainable economic initiatives, demonstrating persistent advocacy and skillful negotiation with external authorities.

19. From my experience working alongside Ms. Horne, I observed her leadership as proactive, informed, and grounded in a deep commitment to whenua and whakapapa. She often took me on hīkoi across sites of significance, most notably at Ōkurei, where she walked me through the top farm and explained the historical and cultural importance of the area. She had already engaged archaeologist Ken Phillips to research and document wāhi tapu and other historic sites in and around Māketū, commissioning a detailed report to ensure these places were properly identified, protected, and understood. Through these hīkoi, she demonstrated a clear vision for safeguarding our heritage and ensuring that historical knowledge informed future decision-making.

20. Ms. Horne was a strong and forthright leader. She spoke plainly, was not afraid to challenge others, and would hold people, including myself, to account where she believed it was necessary. Her approach was direct and unapologetic, reflecting her confidence, clarity of purpose, and commitment to advancing the interests of her people, even where her views were unpopular or uncomfortable.

21. In my work with Ms. Horne on land matters, I saw her ability to navigate complex governance and institutional processes. For example, we worked together to secure access to the Trust's land block at 15 Little Waihi Road for the Rūnanga. Although the land was undeveloped, Ms. Horne understood the long-term value of securing whenua for the people. Through our collaboration, a lease arrangement was established that returned approximately a quarter acre of land adjacent to the Catholic Church for community use, creating future opportunities for development and collective benefit.

22. Ms. Horne also led the filing of our Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 (MACA Act) claim in the High Court.[4] She initiated the research foundation to prepare an extensive evidential report.[5] That work documented more than seventy coastal land blocks and traced land ownership and decision-making through the Native Land Court from as early as 1880. The resulting report, spanning over 260 pages, provides detailed historical, legal, and cultural evidence. Through this work,

[4] CIV-2016-485-000770, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whakaue ki Maketu Incorporated.
[5] David V. Armstrong and Vincent O'Malley, *Ngā Mana o Te Whenua o Te Arawa Customary Tenure Repor*t, Part 2 (commissioned by the Crown Forestry Rental Trust, March 2005), Wai 1353, #A108.

I saw her determination to ensure that Māori land interests were rigorously evidenced and asserted, regardless of political or institutional resistance.

Roana Bennett

23. Roana Bennett is a special Te Arawa wāhine leader in so many ways. She was born into the tribal leadership role as the grand-daughter of the late esteemed Reverand Bishop Bennett of Aotearoa. Educated at University she has spent more than twenty years leading many projects across the Bay of Plenty. She is a govenor for land Trusts and just recently was appointed as a Director to Toi Ohomai Polytechnic in Rotorua.

24. Importantly, she is my beloved wahine and mother to our seven children. She nurtures our tamariki and upholds the whakapapa of our whanau, connecting our past and future.

25. From my perspective, Roana Bennett is a highly capable leader, instigator, and strategic thinker whose leadership has consistently advanced the interests of Ngāti Whakaue and the wider iwi community. I have known Roana through her long-standing involvement in iwi governance, community development, and environmental and social kaupapa; I regard her as someone who combines professional expertise with a strong commitment to her people.

26. Roana holds a Bachelor of Management Studies from the University of Waikato. From a young age, she demonstrated leadership and advocacy, joining Amnesty International as a teenager and later serving on its national board, including in the role of secretary-treasurer. Through that work, she undertook international advocacy in places such as Libya and Nepal. During her university years, she was also actively involved in political and union advocacy, later working as a union advocate in the financial technology sector in Auckland.

27. Roana has extensive experience in governance and senior management across both commercial and not-for-profit sectors, spanning more than three decades. She has held, and continues to hold, governance roles with organisations including the Te Arawa Management Limited, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whakaue ki Maketū, and the Ōwhata 2B Trust, to which she was elected as a trustee in 2022. Collectively, these entities are responsible for the management of significant iwi assets. Her strengths lie in governance, leadership, strategy, project management, and climate change adaptation.

28. I observed Roana's leadership early through her foundational work in establishing what was originally the Ōhinemutu Development Team in the early 1990s, which later became Te Taumata Iho Ake o Ngāti Whakaue. Roana undertook much of the groundwork for this organisation and served as its first General Manager.

29. Under her leadership, the organisation grew from a small group of approximately six people into a large, well-established entity supporting dozens of staff and hundreds of whānau. Te Taumata Iho Ake now delivers wide-ranging programmes across education, te reo Māori, and social wellbeing, and Roana's leadership was instrumental in shaping its kaupapa, values, and long-term direction.

30. Following her time at Te Taumata Iho Ake, Roana continued in senior leadership roles, including as General Manager for Rural Education Activities Programme Central Plateau in Taupō, where she worked across the central North Island delivering education and whānau-focused programmes. In these roles, she had direct and regular engagement with government officials and Ministers, including the Minister of Education, and demonstrated an ability to navigate Crown systems while maintaining a strong iwi-centred focus.

31. Roana's leadership has been recognised nationally. She was a finalist for the Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year Award in 2015 and led a successful campaign in the 2019 Westpac Rotorua Business Awards, winning the Best Not-for-Profit category. She later stood for the Rotorua Ward in 2025, motivated by a deep commitment to the wellbeing of our people, our environment, and our future, and by a belief in balanced, collaborative leadership at a regional governance level.

32. I also worked closely with Roana on the Whakapou Kōrero Wetlands Project, which I initiated through the Trust. From 2016 onwards, Roana played a key leadership role in progressing this kaupapa, which involved the restoration of approximately 23 hectares of land into wetlands. Following Ms. Horne's passing in 2019, Roana stepped into an interim leadership role at my request, largely on a voluntary basis, and she continues to contribute significant time and expertise to this kaupapa despite holding other senior responsibilities.

33. Finally, I acknowledge Roana's influence as a mentor and leader beyond formal roles. I credit her with helping to shape and affirm the leadership values, discipline, and commitment to education that guided our daughter, Tania Tapsell, now Mayor of Rotorua. Roana's emphasis on education, integrity, and service to community has had a lasting impact on the next generation of Māori leadership.

34. In my view, Roana Bennett exemplifies principled, Mana Wāhine leadership in practice. Her work reflects a sustained commitment to rangatiratanga, collective wellbeing, and the advancement of iwi-led solutions, often in circumstances where Crown systems have failed to adequately recognise or support Māori leadership.

35. I give this evidence so that the Tribunal may recognise the enduring impact of these exclusions and contribute to a future where Mana Wāhine and Rangatiratanga are fully restored.

C: CROWN PREJUDICE

36. The Crown has failed to actively protect the rangatiratanga and Tikanga of wāhine Māori. This failure has caused ongoing and cumulative prejudice to our whānau and hapū, the effects of which are both historical and continuing.

37. Wāhine leaders such as Ms. Horne exercised tireless leadership to safeguard whenua, taonga, and cultural heritage, often in circumstances where the Crown's systems provided inadequate recognition or support. Since her passing, leaders such as Roana Bennett have continued this work, frequently assuming responsibilities to address gaps left by Crown inaction.

38. Despite the enduring effects of these failures, wāhine have consistently upheld their roles, demonstrating resilience and commitment to bettering their communities, ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge, and protecting the interests of whānau and hapū. These failures have materially limited our ability to exercise rangatiratanga, restricted access to and control over land and resources, and imposed ongoing barriers to iwi-led decision-making.

39. In my view, these enduring effects reflect a sustained breach of the Crown's obligations under te Tiriti, demonstrating the urgent need for meaningful recognition, active protection of wāhine rangatiratanga, and comprehensive redress to address both past injustices and ongoing inequities.

Dated: 12 February 2026

Tere Tapsell