OFFICIAL

Wai 49, #A3
Wai 682, #A7
Wai 1464, # A4
Wai 1546, #A4
Wai 3553, #A3

I TE RŌPU WHAKAMANA
I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

WAI 682
WAI 1464/1546

KEI RARO I TE MANA o te ture o te Tiriti o Waitangi 1975

I TE TAKE O he kēreme nā, Rewiti Paraone rātou ko Erima Henare, ko Pita Tipene ko Waihoroi Shortland mō Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Hine hei mangai mō ngā uri o Torongare me Hauhaua (Wai 682)

Ā

I TE TAKE O he kēreme nā Te Riwhi Whao Reti rātou ko Hau Hereora, ko Romana Tarau, ko Karen Herbert, ko Edward Cook, ko Pearl Reti hei mangai mō Te Kapotai (Wai 1464/1546)

KŌRERO TAURANGI O KARA GEORGE

I tēnei rā, i te 18 o Whiringa-ā-rangi 2025

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RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
19 Nov 2025
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

Ko ahau ko, **KARA GEORGE**, nō Waikare, e whakaū ana:

1. My name is Kara George and I am a kaumātua of Te Kapotai.

2. I have been involved in hapū affairs, including matters concerning education for decades.

3. Te Kapotai make this application for urgency regarding the Crown's recent decision to change parts of the education system in ways that undermine and eliminate te Tiriti o Waitangi because we ourselves have obligations to our people. We, Te Kapotai, have an obligation to ensure that the Crown upholds its part of the Tiriti partnership.

4. The changes that the Government has made where it has removed the requirement of school boards to implement te Tiriti, and revised the curriculum to limit te Tiriti and all things Māori will impact our tamariki, whānau and hapū.

5. The Tribunal only has to come to Waikare, to see our community, and understand our history to know that the changes to the law and curriculum that demote te Tiriti and demote te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori will cause further harm to our people.

6. Te Kapotai has been absolutely battered by the Government over many years. Our history is one of neglect and loss. This is seen in the current social and economic conditions of our people. There is a long and sustained inequity experienced by our people. For Te Kapotai what that means in terms of education is that our children have less educational success, they experience systemic bias, and they are worse off in the education system. This ultimately impacts their lives as a whole.

7. Many of our people have dispersed from Waikare; they live in towns, they attend mainstream schools, and with that te reo Māori, mātauranga Māori and identity have been lost.

8. We live in a time where the protection and reinvigoration of culture and identity is critical for our people. If we do not maintain what little we have, and if we do not fight for our rights to be recognised, then our identity and what makes us who we are will be further lost.

9. A change by the Government which seeks to demote the treaty, is a demotion of our people. It takes the commitment and mechanism away from the Government doing what is right, and doing what our people need, in the way that our people need it.

10. What we know after all these years of colonisation is that what is not required by law, becomes optional, and what matters is measured. The implication of taking te Tiriti out of the education system, is that te Tiriti does not matter and it is not measured.

11. The Government rationale is that the Crown should hold the primary responsibility for the treaty obligations; it is not appropriate for a Crown entity/school boards to have treaty responsibilities, that schools should focus on academic achievement. We now have an issue with the Crown saying that the Crown entities do not have treaty obligations. This is a huge deep-seated issue for Māori that goes to the core of our treaty understandings and the current treaty relationship. It must be addressed.

12. Schools are a Crown entity – every school is governed by a school board – they have treaty obligations.

13. Without te Tiriti at the forefront of the Education Act, without it guiding our schools, and informing the education of our children, there is no protection for our tamariki and whānau. A treaty-less school, just like a language-less school is assimilationist. Further loss of our culture and identity will occur. The wellbeing of our children will be impacted.

14. Our hapū continues to exercise tikanga and practices which maintain and preserve our people. One of those is “mā te whare e

kōrero", meaning that all decisions impacting the hapū are made at the marae and by our hapū. This maintains collective responsibility and ensures that our hapū mana and rangatiratanga is upheld.

15. What this looks like in terms of issues like education is that, neighbouring schools receiving our children regularly engage with us at the marae and bring forward their kaupapa and matters. We receive reports from schools at our monthly hapū meetings and we ensure hapū representation on their boards and governance entities. This includes Te Kura o Waikare which is a Kura-ā-Iwi based in Waikare, as well as neighbouring schools attended by our children.

16. What this practice means in terms of the treaty relationship is that we expect the Government to deal with us on issues impacting us.

17. Over the years many Government agencies have come to Waikare to address matters, and we have hosted them in accordance with our tikanga and worked through matters.

18. The Ministry of Education has not engaged our people on the significant changes to the law and curriculum that have resulted in the demotion of te Tiriti. These decisions have been made in Wellington, away from our people. The first we hear of it is on the news. That is not partnership and that undermines our mana and rangatiratanga.

19. As I mentioned I have a concern for our tamariki and whānau about changes that will take us backwards and make schools less relevant and less culturally safe, because those who are running the schools and teaching our children no longer have to care about te Tiriti o Waitangi and what it provides for our people.

20. I worry about the different outcomes for our tamariki; those who attend school in the valley will have access to the Kura-ā-Iwi which will maintain an approach to education grounded in te Tiriti and

which will have the autonomy to determine its own curriculum, and those children who will attend mainstream schools that are not obliged to provide such an environment. Similarly, I am concerned for the majority of our children who will transition from the Kura-ā-Iwi at primary level, into mainstream secondary schools where there is no continuity in a curriculum or environment that upholds te Tiriti o Waitangi.

21. The reality is that many of our children at some point in their life, if not their whole life engage in mainstream schooling, and there is now little if any recognition and protection of their culture and identity. The consequence of that as we know is assimilation and loss.

22. The change that school Board of Trustees are not required to give effect to te Tiriti does not take effect for a year, the curriculum is currently under consultation and also does not take effect until 2027. We have a short window of time to address these changes. We need the Tribunal to make urgent findings and recommendations on these matters.

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Sworn at **on / / before me:**

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