I TE RŌPU WHAKAMANA
I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

WAI 3553
WAI 1464/1546
WAI 682

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

I TE TAKE O te ruku tātari ohotata, te Education and Training Amendment Act me Te Mātaiaho

Ā

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

Ā

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

HE KŌRERO TAUNAKI A RERENGA WALKER

I tēnei rā i te 24 o Poutūterangi 2026

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RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
24 Mar 2026
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

TĒNĀ, E TE RŌPŪ WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI O WAITANGI:

Hei tīmatanga kōrero

1. Ko Rerenga Walker tōku ingoa. I am the Tumuaki at Te Kura o Waikare, a Kura-ā-Iwi.

2. Te Kura o Waikare is located in a rural, geographically remote rohe. As a Kura-ā-Iwi, we engage regularly and directly with our hapū and marae about educational kaupapa and take.

3. Te reo Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te Tiriti o Waitangi are foundational to our kura, marae, and the identity of the whānau and hapū in this rohe.

4. There is a misconception that the Government's removal of te Tiriti o Waitangi from the obligations of school boards and curriculum changes do not impact kura Māori.

5. Te Kura o Waikare filed a letter in opposition to the Government's decision to remove te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations from school boards because of the direct negative impact it will have on tamariki, their whānau, and kura and their communities.

6. We are in the midst of our strategic planning cycle for our kura and these issues are at the forefront of our kōrero. The curriculum priorities we have for our kura – as discussed at our Waikare hui – are not reflected in where Te Marautanga is headed. What this means for our kura is that whānau aspirations for their children's education do not align with the curriculum we are required to teach or the way achievement is measured.

Impacts on Te Kura o Waikare

7. The Government has rewritten Te Marautanga and is now consulting on it. In my view, there are serious questions about who contributed to the re-write, the nature of the changes, and the process for consultation. From what we have seen at kura level, there has been limited meaningful engagement with kura-ā-iwi such as ours, despite

the fact that we are directly affected by these changes. The timeframe for engagement has also been constrained, which has limited the ability of our whānau, hapū, and kura to properly consider and respond to the proposed changes.

8. Te Marautanga, alongside the removal of te Tiriti o Waitangi from the obligations of school boards, does not serve our community well. In many ways, it prepares our tamariki to leave the community, rather than strengthening their capacity to remain, contribute, and help our people thrive. For example, we regularly see tauira leave Waikare for education or employment opportunities and not return, which contributes to the ongoing erosion of our reo, tikanga, and local knowledge base within our rohe. The curriculum fails to give sufficient priority to the aspirations and needs of Māori communities, especially small and rural communities like Waikare. The removal of te Tiriti as a guiding obligation further weakens the expectation that the curriculum will actively protect and prioritise what matters most to our people.

9. For us, education should help build our local capacity. It should grow our taumata, our kaikāranga, and those who will carry the responsibilities of hapū and whānau into the future. These are essential roles if our community is to continue to survive and flourish. However, these priorities are not meaningfully reflected in the curriculum. As these roles rely on strong foundations in te reo Māori and tikanga, their absence from curriculum priorities directly impacts the strength, transmission, and everyday use of our reo within Waikare.

10. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on future employment pathways, rather than on empowering communities to be self-sustaining and strong in their own tikanga, mātauranga, and ways of being. It does not sufficiently value the kinds of learning that directly benefit hapū, whānau, and small Māori communities like Waikare. Success is too often framed in terms of contribution to wider New Zealand society, rather than contribution to our own people, our own

identity, and our own futures. In practice, this means that pathways valued within our community are not recognised or prioritised, and our tamariki are encouraged to pursue futures away from their tūrangawaewae. This shift in focus moves our tamariki further away from contexts where their reo and cultural knowledge are required, valued, and sustained.

11. Our tamariki are raised in deep relationship with their taiao. They do not see the natural world as a separate topic of study, but as a living mauri to which they are connected and responsible. This is not simply curriculum content; it is a way of being that is reinforced through daily practice, including engagement with local whenua, awa, and marae. That understanding carries obligations and responsibilities, yet this way of thinking is not genuinely reflected in the curriculum. As a result, there are limited opportunities for tamariki to develop this knowledge deeply through te reo Māori and within their own cultural and environmental context.

12. There is also an ongoing disregard for local autonomy. Government directives continue to micromanage communities and educators, including those who are qualified, experienced, and deeply invested in local curriculum design, teaching, and long-term sustainability. This undermines the ability of communities like Waikare to exercise rangatiratanga over our own education system and to shape education according to what matters most for our people, including how reo Māori is prioritised, taught, and sustained within our kura. “Mā tātou, mō tātou, e ai ki a tātou o Waikare.”

13. The Government’s priorities do not align with the aspirations of Waikare. They contradict our understanding of what a successful student looks like. For us, success is not defined only by participation in the national workforce or contribution to mainstream society. It must also include service to whānau, hapū, iwi, te ao Māori, and the long-term wellbeing of our community. At present, that vision is largely absent. This misalignment is reinforced through assessment practices that measure our tamariki against standards that do not reflect these

values, resulting in our kura and our tamariki being assessed against criteria that do not recognise their strengths, and positioning Waikare within a deficit frame.

Continuity between kura and mainstream education

14. What happens in mainstream education affects Kura-ā-Iwi, including Te Kura o Waikare. As a rural school and a kura Māori, we already face inequity and bias in the education system. Te Kapotai have also experienced the impacts of urbanisation, which have resulted in the loss of much of our reo and mātauranga Māori over time. These existing challenges will be further exacerbated by the new curriculum changes, which do not adequately support the revitalisation and retention of our reo within our own community.

15. With our rural location, we have many tamariki who move in and out of our school. We have whānau who move back home and enrol their tamariki, and we have whānau who move away for job opportunities or housing and enrol their tamariki into other schools. Many of our tamariki shift to Bay of Islands College (a kura auraki), for secondary schooling. This means that many of our students interact with mainstream schooling over their lifetime.

16. Our approach is to be inclusive; however, it is a reality that where whānau move back home and their tamariki have not had access to te Tiriti, te reo, and mātauranga Māori, they may feel disadvantaged. In these situations, our staff are required to undertake additional work to support those tamariki to integrate and reach the same level of understanding as their peers. This creates a disconnect in teaching approaches across the classroom, where tamariki are at different levels of cultural and linguistic competency. We also need to support whānau to strengthen te reo in the home, however many face barriers and inequities in doing so, including limited access to resources and support.

17. The same issue then arises if our tamariki leave because of relocation or transition into other schooling environments. The mainstream

system can be unfamiliar to them, and their achievement there may be compromised as a result of the disconnect between learning environments.

18. Another issue arises where those who leave our school for mainstream education lose access to these teachings and, over time, lose their reo and mātauranga Māori. We see this loss occur within a relatively short period, particularly where there is limited reinforcement in the home or community. The cumulative effect is that our people are worse off, and the intergenerational transmission of our knowledge is weakened.

Hei whakakapi kōrero

19. Schooling shapes the world of our tamariki. The curriculum taught to our tamariki needs to be relevant to them and founded in their cultural worldview, language, and beliefs.

I TĒNEI RĀ, te rā 24 o Poutūterangi 2026

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Rerenga Walker