WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

Wai 3564

CONCERNING the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975

AND a claim by Larz Ngawaka on behalf of the Māori Fintech Consortium

MEMORANDUM-DIRECTIONS OF THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

The Registrar will please enter this matter on the register of claims and give it the next available Wai number. The register should note that the claim was received on 20 April 2026.

The claimant has applied to have their claim heard urgently by the Tribunal and this application will be dealt with in separate directions.

The claimant should please take note of the 'Wai' number reference at the top of the page. Please use this claim number in any communication with the Tribunal.

This claim is lodged by Larz Ngawaka on behalf of the Māori Fintech Consortium, and concerns the digital currency regulatory framework currently being developed by Te Pūtea Matua Reserve Bank of New Zealand. The claimant alleges that the Crown has breached the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi by failing to:

- embed Māori governance at the decision-making level of digital currency infrastructure design;
- ensure formal Māori governance participation when proceeding with foundational architecture decisions, including ledger design, programmability frameworks, data access rules, identity infrastructure, governance structures and settlement hierarchy;
- ensure transparency regarding the timeline, process and design choices in the development of a regulatory framework;
- respond substantively to documented, good-faith engagement by the claimant over a period of more than two months, including failure to honour an explicit written commitment to make contact; and
- treat Māori input as a governance obligation rather than a consultative courtesy.

The claimant seeks a variety of relief, including recommendations that the Crown:

- pause any finalisation of digital currency infrastructure settings until a formal Māori governance process has been established and completed;
- work with the Māori Fintech Consortium to establish a Māori Governance Working Group with decision-making authority, not advisory status, over digital currency infrastructure settings with Treaty implications;
- conduct and publish a formal assessment of the framework's implications for the obligations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi before any settings are finalised; and
- ensure that the framework explicitly contemplates and enables a coexistence model, permitting a Māori-led financial ecosystem to operate as a peer system alongside mainstream infrastructure.

The claimant may amend this claim at a later stage. In any case the Tribunal may require the claimant to prepare a fully particularised statement of claim before the claim can be heard.

The Tribunal currently runs district and kaupapa inquiry programmes in which claims are grouped either by district or by kaupapa (thematic) issue. Historical claims are those that raise grievances which arose before 21 September 1992. Contemporary claims have grievances that arose on or after that date. Some claims have both historical and contemporary grievances.

If an urgent hearing is not granted for this claim, it would appear to fall within the scope of Wai 3550, the Economic Development Kaupapa Inquiry.

When the time comes for the claim to be prepared for hearing, the Tribunal will decide whether there are any matters in the present claim that the Tribunal may not inquire into. The claimant needs to be aware that there are some matters that the Tribunal is not allowed to inquire into, such as any Bill that has been introduced into Parliament (unless the Bill has been referred to the Tribunal under section 8 of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975). Also, when historical claims are settled, the settlement legislation usually forbids the Tribunal from inquiring further into the matters that have been settled.

The claimant also needs to be aware that the Tribunal does not make settlements. After the Tribunal has completed an inquiry into claims, it writes a report making recommendations to the Crown. It cannot tell the Crown what to do; it may only recommend that the Crown acts to address the negative consequences of its breaches of the principles of the Treaty.

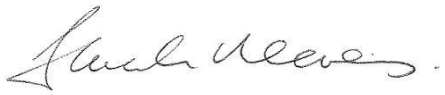
Legal Aid Services provides help for Waitangi Tribunal claimants. For advice on getting a lawyer or receiving funding, please contact Legal Aid Services at their Wellington central office or one of the local offices; the claimant should check their telephone directory for contact details.

Any questions about the contents of this document should be directed to The Registrar, Waitangi Tribunal, DX SX 11237, Wellington; phone (04) 914 3000, fax (04) 914 3001; email wt.registrar@justice.govt.nz.

The Registrar is to send a copy of this direction to the claimant and to:

- Crown Law Office;
- Te Kahui Whakatau (Treaty Settlements), Office for Māori Crown Relations – Te Arawhiti;
- Crown Forestry Rental Trust;
- Legal Aid Services;
- Te Puni Kōkiri;
- Te Pūtea Matua Reserve Bank of New Zealand;
- Māori Fintech Consortium; and
- All those on the notification list for Wai 3550, the Economic Development Kaupapa Inquiry.

DATED at Wellington this 22nd day of April 2026



Judge Sarah Reeves
Deputy Chairperson
WAITANGI TRIBUNAL