



# Te Kawerau Iwi Tribal Authority & Settlement Trust

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cc: Penny Hulse, Greg Presland, Mace Ward, Te Warena Taua

Tena koe Ian,

## **RE: Te Kawerau a Maki position on Waitakere Ranges Kauri PTA**

I am writing to you to clarify the Te Kawerau a Maki position on Kauri Dieback within the Waitakere Ranges, and to seek Council support for a rahui which we will be undertaking this year.

Te Kawerau a Maki are the mana whenua of the Waitakere Ranges. The lands and forest here are considered to be our heartland, and are of the highest cultural significance to us. Our tikanga is that kauri are tupuna and a central part of a healthy forest in terms of ecology but also in terms of mauri and wairua. The issue of PTA within the forest is no less than an existential threat to Te Kawerau a Maki. The importance of kauri to the Waitakere ecosystem is supported by science.

The causes, impact and alarming rate of PTA spread are now well known. Te Kawerau a Maki's position on the matter is also well known.

The forest itself is nationally significant. This is evidenced by the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008, which enshrined the intrinsic values of the area and the interest of Te Kawerau a Maki in statute. An Act of Parliament sits at the very top of the hierarchy of any subsequent regional or local plans or policies. The significance of the Waitakere Ranges is also enshrined in the Te Kawerau a Maki Claims Settlement Act 2015, through which we hold additional statutory interest over much of the WRHA as well as freehold title over blocks of ex-DOC land within. In addition the RMA recognises that the protection of our taonga, lands and wahi tapu are matters of national significance. Finally, Te Tiri o Waitangi places an obligation on the Crown (and by extension Council) to protect Te Kawerau a Maki including our taonga.

The national significance of the forest, the severity of the risk and spread of PTA, and the existential threat to Te Kawerau a Maki have not been taken seriously by our Treaty Partners to date. When the issue has been raised, our voice is drowned by a cacophony of self-interested community voices, operational policies, and political lethargy. The time to act is now, and to act boldly.

Te Kawerau a Maki wish to work with the Council, Central Government, and the community on protecting the forest, but have no intention of waiting another 10 years for deliberations or further trialing of methods that demonstrably do not work. Our forest will be dead by then. Subsequently as kaitiaki of the area, we have no choice but to close down the entire forest (barring roads and private property) to ensure its long-term protection and survival.

To this end, we wish to take forward a combined Rahui supported by a Controlled Area Notice (empowered by the Biosecurity Act) before the end of this year. We see great synergy between the two approaches combined. I provide below some initial thoughts or principles as to how it could work.

- Rahui. Te Kawerau a Maki can implement a rahui easily enough as a matter of tikanga undertaken by our kaumatua. We propose agreeing the edges of the forest with Council experts, and could then be implemented within one day through visiting several places within the WRHA. A rahui in this sense is a total prohibition or quarantine on human presence and activity within an area, to allow the environment to effectively heal itself. It relates to both the physical and importantly to the spiritual.
- Controlled Area Notice. These are already in place in NZ in much less readily defined areas than the Waitakere Ranges. The boundary would match that of the rahui. This would allow for the legislative powers to enforce the rahui if needed, and to provide the technical infrastructure. Importantly it also shows a true partnership between Mana Whenua and the Crown.
- Closure and rolling-openings. The approach would be to close the forest completely, then work through a program of risk management, risk assessment, mitigation design and implementation, and upgrades leading to a series of rolling-openings once the risk and activity type were addressed in a specific area.
- Warrants. Although the rahui is a prohibition on human presence and activity, we think that a limited number of certain people who are trained and mandated to look after the forest can essentially remain involved under tight controls and with as low frequency as possible. This would require a 'warrant' type system where such people charged with on-going pest control or monitoring (or other agreed activities) would first have to undergo cultural training and scientific training. It could be that a kaumatua, kaitiaki officer, or cultural monitor would accompany such people into the rahui area.
- Communications. We think that a clear communication strategy with the community will be required, and should include large Rahui/CAN notice boards at the 3 or 4 main entrances to the Waitakere Ranges.

I have had several discussions with other iwi who have healthy kauri in their forests, particularly at Hunua. I have communicated our intention to close the Waitakere Forest this year and they have been supportive to date.

I wanted to ensure that our position is crystal clear for Council. If need be we are determined to proceed with the rahui without your support.

I am happy to discuss further, but request that real effort is placed on progressing the option I outline above.

Kind Regards,

Edward Ashby  
Executive Manager  
Te Kawerau Iwi Settlement Trust.