

**Te Ripō and Te Kōpuka nā te Awa Tupua Hui  
Te Ihingarangi Marae, Poro-o-Tarao Road, Waimiha  
Turama Hawira ; Thursday 30 May 2019; 1pm**

Te pou o te whakatupua  
Te Pou o te whakatawhito  
Te pou o Ranginui e tū nei.

We are humbled to stand together, as Te Pou Tupua, those who have been tasked with upholding the new status of Te Awa Tupua.

Established by Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act, we are mindful of our legislative status – through Te Pā Auroa nā Te Awa Tupua – and our origins stretching back to the Whanganui River Deed of Settlement – Ruruku Whakatupua – signed in 2014.

All of these documents and the statute described the fundamental role of Te Pou Tupua as being the face and the voice of Te Awa Tupua, and to uphold Tupua te Kawa.

In this we need to honour Te Awa Tupua as an indivisible and living whole.

But how do we all make this happen? How do we understand what is best for the management and maintenance of the Whanganui River and its tributaries from the mountain to the sea?

While our role – and indeed the office of Te Pou Tupua is established by statute – we are here to represent and advocate for the interests of Te Awa Tupua.

Representation, is, of course, only one aspect of implementation.

Te Awa Tupua legitimises in law a set of innate values for Te Awa Tupua called Tupua te Kawa.

Tupua te Kawa is the natural law and value system of Te Awa Tupua, stemming from a hapū and iwi value system and the principles in which Te Kōpuka will uphold and operate within.

These values will logically guide all interactions in relation to the health and wellbeing of the Whanganui River and its tributaries for the future.

There are four key principles:

Firstly, Ko te Awa te mātāpuna o te ora. The river is the source of spiritual and physical sustenance. Te Awa Tupua is a spiritual and physical entity that supports and sustains both the life and natural resources within the river and the health and wellbeing of the people.

Secondly, Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole from the mountains to the sea, incorporating the river and all of its physical and metaphysical elements.

Thirdly, the iwi and hapū of the river have an inalienable interconnection with, and responsibility to, Te Awa Tupua and its health and wellbeing. We often represent this in the words *Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au. I am the River and the River is me.*

Finally, Te Awa Tupua is a singular entity comprised of many elements and communities, working together for the common purpose of the health and wellbeing of Te Awa Tupua.

We know that all parties participating in Te Kōpuka will have different perspectives, strategies and long-term plans. The concept of a common focus for Te Awa Tupua will help assist Te Kōpuka to work collectively towards Te Heke Ngahuru ki Te Awa Tupua the 'Whole of River Strategy'.

Te Awa Tupua provides for an inclusive framework focused on the health and wellbeing of the awa, and in doing so encourages a common focus. As Te Pou Tupua, it is our role and responsibility to promote these values and to advocate for the local and national community in the interests of providing for the health and wellbeing of the Whanganui River.

In this, we are all collectively bound by Tupua te Kawa, that is, the metaphysicality, indivisibility; inalienable responsibility of hapū and iwi; and the collective responsibility of our many communities to the health and wellbeing of Te Awa Tupua.

Your respective leadership; your analysis and advice will be imperative.

We are wanting to see the influence of each of our diverse communities in forging the paradigm shift that we know is necessary to effectively herald in the change we require.

Our initial work has been, therefore, to engage the Awa community mai i uta ki tai, from the source of the Awa to the sea.

We have been motivated by how best to gather views on how the new status and Tupua te Kawa can be utilised in the interests of promoting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of the Whanganui River and its communities.

It is here that we begin to intertwine the wider perspectives that members bring to Te Kōpuka nā te Awa Tupua; the emphasis on whanaungatanga; the drive to be forward thinking and our shared commitment to ensure that our long-term relationships in all our places are important.

We want to lift the voice of Te Awa Tupua across multiple mediums and diverse fora.

As Te Pou Tupua we want to work together in the exciting space that is carved out from an explicit articulation of the values of mana whenua as the guiding framework.

Finally, I refer to the name gifted to Te Kōpuka nā Te Awa Tupua.

Te Kōpuka is named for the white manuka, the strong pliable material used to build traditional eel weirs.

The pā tuna (eel weir) was a common device for catching eels in rivers, streams and the outlets of lagoons and lakes.

In the 1880s, there were more than 350 pā tuna in the Whanganui River. The weirs were so frequently erected at rapids, where the force of flowing water is much accelerated. The construction of the eel weirs were therefore ingenious – an innovation that directly contributed to the survival of the people.

In the 19th century, European settlers removed these pā tuna to make rivers more navigable. Between 1886 and 1888 over 500 tribal members petitioned the government to save their weirs – but by the turn of the century, almost all were gone.

So, in using the name Te Kōpuka – we think back to that history – that history of innovation, of survival, but also of challenge and conflict.

And we think of those enduring properties of the white manuka which was used to build the weirs - symbolising connection, cooperation and strength.

We look forward to our conversations, our strategies and other shared learnings as we come together, to focus on the health and wellbeing of Te Awa Tupua.

**Te Ripo and Te Kopuka nā te Awa Tupua Hui  
Te Ihingarangi Marae, Poro-o-Tarao Road, Waimiha  
Hon Dame Tariana Turia  
Thursday 30 May 2019; 1pm**

This is a very significant day to be here, bringing together the leadership and the communities of Te Awa Tupua.

It reminds me of a day in early November 2017 at Ngapuwaiwaha Marae in which we came together, as whānau of the awa, to celebrate the inauguration of Te Pou Tupua.

In that day, we were profoundly aware of those who had been here before us – immediate to mind of course Sir Archie Te Atawhai Taiaroa, but there are others who laid the foundation for what occurred that day from throughout the breadth of Te Awa Tupua, it's many hapu and iwi.

A river runs through their veins; a river of whakapapa; of sacred significance; a river that brings together the legacies of all those who have travelled Te Awa Tupua as the central artery of our tribal heart.

The fact that we find ourselves here at Te Ihingarangi Marae continues on that wairua story – and it connects us through to our relationship between the Waimiha stream and the Whanganui.

Waimiha is a sacred stream commencing on Pureora-o-Kahu mountain and is a major contributor to the Whanganui River via the Ongarue River.

The Ongarue was once an important source of food and a means of transportation right through to Whanganui.

Kokopu, koaru, marearea, tuna, koura, piharau were plentiful in the river; putangitangi and kereru inhabited the riverbanks while komata and hinau were harvested from the banks.

Alongside of the mahinga kai, there were special places along the river where ceremonial blessings were performed, he wai whakarite.

And so today, here at Te Ihingarangi we acknowledge ngā manga iti, ngā manga nui e honohono kau ana, ka tupu hei Awa Tupua: the small and large streams that flow into one another and form one river.

It is very special to be present at this inaugural meeting of Te Awa Tupua strategy group, Te Kōpuka nā Te Awa Tupua.

The group will represent iwi from across our river catchment, local authorities, central government, environmental groups, commercial and recreational users.

After 18 years in parliament – six terms of office – I cannot escape, of course, the symbolism of this inaugural meeting being held on the day that Government releases its annual budget.

The budget this year has characterised its spending decisions and funding priorities as having a focus on wellbeing. I can't help but think we could just as easily describe wellbeing in terms such as 'Whānau Ora' or 'Te Awa Tupua'.

Because when Government recognised Te Awa Tupua with a legal definition, it gave voice to important principles. Two of those are:

- **Te Awa Tupua mai i te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa** — an integrated view of Te Awa Tupua from the mountains to the sea; and
- **Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au** — the health and wellbeing of the Whanganui River is intrinsically interconnected with the health and wellbeing of the people.

What government departments and officials are doing in Lambton Quay, we are already doing here today driven by our engagement with Te Awa Tupua.

I want us to be proud of the new direction we are forging.

Together we will be producing the first of its kind, a whole of river strategy based on the inherent values of the River itself.

A strategy that will take passion, momentum, leadership and most important of all, humility. Why humility you might wonder? I will come to that shortly.

Suffice to say, I have every confidence that those gathered here today are people capable of taking Te Awa Tupua to our heart, to work together, to forge new territory.

For while Te Awa Tupua is enshrined in law, it is up to us all to develop a strategy of relearning, of inclusion; of courage and of humility to the innate values of the River, Tupua Te Kawa. In doing so we will achieve the resilience necessary as a river community to protect the health and wellbeing of our sacred awa.

Fundamental to our approach is that we are breathing life into a paradigm shift from speaking **about** the river to actively speaking to the river.

When the first Tira Hoe Waka took off in 1989, one of the significant messages shared with all those who took that tribal journey was “*Kauaka e kōrero mō te Awa, engari kōrero ki te Awa*. Don’t merely talk about the river, rather speak to and commune with the river. It is via this core dictate of the old people we humble ourselves to the River’s mana. We strip ourselves of our institutional bias, our individual political standpoints and acknowledge that we need to relearn what this River system means to us, and what place we collectively occupy in its scheme.

Thus, Te Pou Tupua looks to Te Kōpuka to help lead a collective approach, and a united drive to truly understand the intent of Te Awa Tupua, and to achieve the momentum we need.

By actively engaging with one another, we are expressing our common duty of responsibility to care for our river.

The strength of this approach is that together, we are stronger.

In our iwi narratives we have many ways of describing this call to unity. One of the concepts we draw on is *He muka nā te taurawhiri o Hinengakau*.

This river system will join all of its people, its communities together to work for its health and wellbeing together in what is known as a strand of the sacred rope of Hinengakau.

Another metaphor reflects our two primary tupuna: Ruatipua and Paerangi-i-tewharetoka.

***Ngā wai inuina o Ruatipua ēnā  
Ngā manga iti, ngā manga nui e honohono kau ana  
Ka hono, ka tupu, hei awa; Hei Awa Tupua***

This refers to the drinking fonts of Ruatipua; the small and large streams which flow into one another and continue to link, and swell, until a river is formed; Te Awa Tupua.

I love all these images, the word pictures painted through the ways our people refer to the Whanganui River and its unique strengths.

In many ways it provides us all – whether as district organisations or iwi authorities – to embrace a collective focus on the health and wellbeing of Te Awa Tupua knowing that our mutual focus will benefit us all.

Whether we whakapapa to Te Awa Tupua, have been elected onto statutory bodies, or have been identified as decisions makers in the design and implementation of Te Heke Ngahuru ki Te Awa Tupua, I know that all of us here also have a primal connection, a heart-strong association to our beautiful river.

We have swum, washed, played, prayed, dived, paddled into its depths.

We have sat aside its banks and reflected on life values.

We have travelled along its tributaries, uploaded picturesque shots on facebook or snapchat, purchased paintings that show the river in another light, been inspired by its depths and the shimmering mists on a cold winter morning.

Sometimes we just gaze out at the rippling waters of Te Awa Tupua and feel that intimate relationship to the river that brings us all here today.

During the legislative process we heard of the willingness of local government to work collaboratively with the iwi and hapu of Whanganui , with the Crown, with each other, and with communities in giving effect to Te Awa Tupua.

I truly believe that the work of Te Kōpuka nā Te Awa Tupua will set a new global benchmark for the collaboration of central government, local government, Tangata Whenua and communities in the restoration and preservation of our waterways.

Our absolute hope as Te Pou Tupua is that through our work together we will bring to life the aspirations of our many pahake who have fought for the awa over countless generations.

And in doing so, I believe we will realise the sacred intent of Tupua te Kawa, and all those who uphold the rights, powers and duties which must be taken by Te Pou Tupua on behalf of, and in the name of, Te Awa Tupua.