



Ngāti Rehua-Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust Board

Monday 30 March 2020

Hon. Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Health, Minister of Maori Affairs, Minister of Police, Minister of Maori Relations

Director-General of Health, Dr Bloomfield, Police Commissioner, Mike Bush, National Crisis Management Centre, Auckland Emergency Management, Mana Whenua Kaitiaki Forum o Tāmaki Makaurau

Tēnā koutou e ngā Rangatira,

Me ngā mihi ki ngā tīpuna, ngā mate o tātou, o tēna marae, o tēna hapū, o tēna motu, o tēna whakaminenga – Haere ki te pō, haere, haere! Moe mai ra.

He mihi ki a koe mo ngā mahi maha e whaia ake nei e o koutou ope mo ngā tini i te wā nei.

Ngāti Rehua-Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust: COVID-19 Urgent Concerns for Aotea - Great Barrier Island Community

I am writing to you as interim chair of the Ngāti Rehua-Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust Board to seek your urgent assistance to support the people of Aotea who are facing extraordinary risks by outside visitors during this national health pandemic crisis Level 4 lockdown. As you might know, Aotea is a unique, special motu, which is isolated, 80km East of Auckland.

Aotea Great Barrier Island CV19 Urgent Problems

Tāngata whenua on Aotea have raised alarm with us. One of our trustees and our interim administrators are at home in isolation on Aotea Island. The locals estimate that since the Level 4 lockdown last Thursday, up to 100 non-local boats have arrived and are anchoring around Aotea. Up to 60 boats are now based at Port Fitzroy in the large northern harbour. Other reports advise of another 40 boats at different bays and beaches around the motu. We are deeply concerned at reports that some of those boaties are breaching COVID-19 Level 4 isolation protocols and travelling around the island; not staying in one place.

Those boat owners had the opportunity to stay and anchor in one location with the rest of the country who went into isolation on 26 March 2020. Whole boatie families and groups are coming ashore onto Aotea motu. Many are not staying in one place, flaunting the COVID-19 isolation protocols, implemented to prevent the spread of the virus in our communities. Tāngata whenua are also reporting that some boaties are fishing, diving, dredging for scallops in blatant breach of the regulations to not do this. Further, we have received reports of boaties rafting (tying up) to each other's boats, having boozy social parties on the water.

The Ngāti Rehua-Ngātiwai ki Aotea community are also concerned that when boaties come ashore they are buying up large amounts of goods and fuel from the shops. There are only 4 stores on the whole island, which are not easy to get to. These 4 shops serve 1,000 local residents, who are isolated. Purchasing supplies is logistically and practically difficult for the

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community; compounded by the COVID-19 Level 4 isolation restrictions. Whereas boaties can relatively easily access food and can pull anchor to sail to the mainland 80km away.

Aotea peoples' concerns become heightened when boaties do not stay in their 'bubble' but move around the motu, undertaking activities that should be avoided and interacting with other people. This behaviour increases the risk to the old and immune-compromised people in our isolated community. As the representative trust of tāngata whenua o Aotea, we are deeply concerned that our kaumātua/kuia, immune-compromised and many whānau on low income, who collectively comprise the group most likely to be subjected to the virus, are being placed at heightened risk by this irresponsible activity by these visitors to Aotea.

Some of our trustees have spoken to the local Aotea police to ask for a police helicopter to visit Aotea and warn boaties to practice safe isolation during this crisis, before further prejudice impacts on our remote community. We have been advised that obtaining this resource is not a decision they can make and so we are imploring that you as politicians responsible for the safety of this vulnerable community to please help.

Is it possible to send the Auckland police helicopter and the police launch Deodar or both to visit Aotea and contact all the boats anchored in the moana of Aotea and tell them to comply with the restrictions? We look forward to your earliest response. Thank you in anticipation.

Heoi ano ra, anei he whakawhētai, anei hoki ngā mihi me ngā manākitanga ki a koutou me ō koutou whānau, hapū katoa i ēnei wā uaua o tātou. Noho ora mai.

Tavake Barron Afeaki

Barrister, Interim Independent Chair, Counsel Assisting the High Court

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cc: Peni Henare, Shane Jones, Rino Tirakatene

cc: Trustees: Bruce Davies, Aperahama Edwards, Valmaine Toki, Jason Wii

cc: Johnny Whaanga

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