

Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal's four key points to the Panel of the Review into the Future for Local Government:

After meeting with the Panel in December, I left them with four key messages.

1. Local Government of the future needs to understand its strengths, weaknesses and limitations and make space for alternative approaches to the way the environment and local communities are managed.
2. That those alternative approaches to environmental and community management need to include tangata whenua-led 'ground up' solutions (to supplement Crown derived approaches).
3. Our iwi/hapū/whānau communities already possess a Treaty-derived right to design and implement management arrangements as they see fit and in areas where they maintain mana whenua (and therefore do not seek permission from the Crown but rather practical support); and,
4. These solutions are based upon the core wisdom lying at the heart of tangata whenuatanga or indigeneity - that of a kinship-based relationship with natural world environments and ancestral places. This core wisdom gives rise to the ethics and practices of kaitiakitanga, the redevelopment of which is a feature of iwi/hapū/whānau approaches to environmental management today.

I was encouraged to state these views during my kōrero with the Panel as result of leading a two-year research project in the North regarding iwi/hapū/whānau/marae views of the Wairoa River, its tributaries and environs. Many of our tangata whenua communities seek a much more empowering and cooperative relationship with the Crown (in the form of local government). Sometimes this means simply 'getting out of the way'.

A couple of additional points that I also made to the panel are as follows:

- When representatives of local government say that they are not the Crown, this infuriates the Māori Treaty partner as it feels that local government are seeking to 'get around' responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi through a technicality. Local government is very clearly and obviously an extension and expression of Crown power.
- Iwi/Māori communities ultimately hold the Crown/Government (central, regional, local) accountable for the deteriorated state of the environment we see today. Further, they believe that if the Crown/Government and its agencies are the *only* empowered/resourced party of the future involved in environmental management, then desired change is unlikely to occur as this represents 'more of the same'.

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