

Waitara Endowed Land proposal a way forward for Waitara: Te Kotahitanga o Te Atiawa Trust

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For immediate release.

A proposal that will allow Waitara leaseholders to purchase the freehold title to their property and that will transfer some land to iwi, is a way forward for the community says Te Kotahitanga o Te Atiawa Trust (Te Kotahitanga).

On Tuesday 12 April, 2016, New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) will consider approving the proposed Waitara Lands Local Bill for consultation.

Te Kotahitanga Chair, Liana Poutu, says the proposal has come as a result of immense compromise by Te Atiawa in order to progress the issue.

“This proposal does not fully recognise or compensate for the fact that the land confiscations of 1865 (including Waitara and the Pekapeka Block) were wrongful, unjust and in breach of the Treaty of Waitangi. However, we understand the importance of looking forward and progressing this matter.”

The key proposals in the current draft of the Bill will allow:

- Leaseholders (Some of whom are Te Atiawa) to have a right to purchase the freehold title to their property for the unimproved land value, with income from the sale of the leases to be used for the benefit of the Waitara community.
- NPDC-owned land at Battiscombe Terrace, East Beach and Clifton Park will be transferred to Te Kotahitanga, with NPDC continuing to administer these areas as public reserves.
- Land at Brown Road and adjacent to the Battiscombe Terrace land will be transferred to Te Kotahitanga to develop as determined by the iwi.
- Te Kotahitanga will have a right of first refusal to purchase the western part of Ranfurly Park and the Waitara Golf Course if the Council decides to sell.

Ms Poutu says it was positive that some of the funds from the leasehold rentals and sales proceeds will be invested in the Waitara community and that Te Atiawa will have a say in how funds are to be distributed.

“Waitara has not seen the same level of growth and improvement that other areas of Taranaki have enjoyed in recent decades. We understand that a rising tide does not always lift all boats. This is a way that will help ensure more targeted investment is made to support the development of Waitara.”

The proposal is the result of further negotiations and a Heads of Agreement signed between Te Atiawa and NPDC in August 2014.

“Te Atiawa decided not to purchase the land as part of its treaty settlement, however, that decision did not resolve the need to address the issue of redress and compensation for the losses endured by our people involving the Pekapeka block, says Ms Poutu.

She said that Te Atiawa have always sought the return of all confiscated lands, however the iwi had learned that in order for progress to occur compromise was required.

"Our Te Atiawa Treaty settlement and the transfer of some land in this proposal can never fully compensate for the wrongs of the past.

"Te Atiawa have been expected to make immense compromise in order to progress these issues. We hope that others are open to working with us so that our community can move forward together."