

Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao – Annual Report on the EPA’s Mātauranga Programme for 2020-2021

1 December 2021

Purpose

1. Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao (Ngā Kaihautū) is pleased to present the EPA Board with its first annual report providing our assessment and views of the EPA’s Mātauranga Programme for the 2020-21 financial year.

Introduction

2. As the statutory Māori advisory committee to the EPA on matters relating to policy, processes, and decisions, Ngā Kaihautū has had a strong commitment to supporting and guiding the EPA through the development of its mātauranga programme and framework. We look forward to maintaining that support through the implementation of the programme in 2021-22, and beyond.
3. The programme is a testament to the contributions of members of Te Herenga, the EPA’s network of Māori environmental practitioners centred in the regions, and Ngā Parirau o te Mātauranga, the kaumātua group drawn from within Te Herenga, who have tirelessly shared their wisdom and expertise with the EPA for many years. We pay tribute to the kaumātua for the depth of knowledge and guidance that they have generously provided to ensure the mātauranga programme – and most recently the mātauranga framework – is grounded in tikanga Māori.
4. We acknowledge the passion and commitment of staff across the EPA who have given their time, effort and knowledge to support the success of the programme over the past four years. This includes their commitment to the integrity of the programme from a tikanga Māori perspective. We note the following quote from the report on the programme and the development of the mātauranga framework, “*Partnership in action: The EPA’s mātauranga framework*”:

The mātauranga programme’s methodology will remain underpinned by the ongoing guidance of Ngā Kaihautū, Ngā Parirau, and Matakīrea [the programme’s external working group]. This will continue to ensure integrity from a tikanga Māori perspective.

5. This is fundamental to the success of the programme. Without ongoing guidance from kaumātua and kaitiaki who have a deep understanding of te ao Māori and tikanga, the programme will lose its integrity and its resonance with Māori will decline.

Celebrating achievements

6. In 2020-21, we celebrated with the EPA several achievements for the programme:
 - a. successful launch of the mātauranga framework in July 2020
 - b. completion, in September 2020, of work to scope, develop and test cultural-capability training for EPA decision makers and staff that focused on understanding te ao Māori and providing practical experience to apply the mātauranga framework
 - c. EPA Board approval, in October 2020, of measures of success for the mātauranga programme and framework
 - d. a hui with experts from the external reference group (Matakīrea), Ngā Parirau and representatives from Ngā Kaihautū and EPA staff, early April 2021 in Wellington
 - e. delivery of cultural capability training with a group of Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) decision makers in late April 2021
 - f. completion of key documents to successfully complete the transition of the programme from project phase to business-as-usual (BAU), including:
 - i. a Benefits Map of both realised and anticipated benefits of the Mātauranga Programme which include recognition of the EPA's sector leadership role and enabling the EPA to support the Crown to deliver on its obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi,
 - ii. a BAU transition plan – which outlines ongoing workstreams as part of BAU. We note that EPA business groups have set aside resources in their 2021/22 Business Plans to support the work of the transition and ongoing activities,
 - iii. a draft project close and transition to BAU report.

Comment

7. The waka hourua, or double-hulled canoe, which symbolises the EPA's approach to mātauranga, is a powerful metaphor of partnership. The two hulls represent two knowledge systems – mātauranga and science – moving together in the same direction providing an apt picture for the aspirations of the programme. The interwoven sails represent the information, evidence, advice, and risk assessment that inform EPA decisions, and which draw upon mātauranga and science.
8. We note the EPA's decision of 27 October 2020 on the Beach Energy Resources NZ (Holdings) Limited application for a marine discharge consent application in the Canterbury Basin. It is evident in the report from decision makers that they actively engaged with the information provided from a Māori perspective, including mātauranga that had been shared by a local hapū relating to a taniwha. We attribute this to the awareness created by the launch of the mātauranga framework in July 2020 and acknowledge the decision makers for their work. We look forward to further evidence of the framework's impact on future EPA decision making.
9. In the early stages of developing the mātauranga framework, Ngā Kaihautū identified cultural capability-building for EPA decision-makers and staff as critical to the mātauranga programme's success. We appreciate the considerable amount of work that has gone into supporting this critical success factor. We were also delighted with the overwhelmingly positive feedback from decision makers who completed the

training. The comments from decision makers who said they came away with a better understanding of mātauranga, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ the Treaty of Waitangi, and the Māori world view is a reflection on the high standard and quality of work that was delivered.

10. We have appreciated the opportunities to have input into helping shape the programme, prior to its inception and during all phases of the work since. Given the breadth of experience within Ngā Kaihautū, we would like to explore with the EPA how we can more directly support the programme. The following section, next steps, includes suggestions of areas of work where this may be possible.

Next steps

11. The following are suggestions that could be considered for next steps over the next two to three years as the mātauranga programme is implemented, acknowledging that the EPA has begun to consider what could be possible in several of these areas. They are:
 - a. Continue to progress the work that is underway to refresh the EPA's strategy for engaging with Māori at iwi, hapū and whanau levels. Meaningful engagement with Māori is critical to the work of the EPA, and to the mātauranga programme. It will enable the building of trust between the EPA, iwi, hapū and whānau Māori, engendering confidence that EPA decision makers will be able to respectfully test and probe mātauranga from a mātauranga basis. This is an area where Ngā Kaihautū members have relevant expertise and networks to contribute to the work.
 - b. How can EPA processes be refined to facilitate and encourage Māori participation in decision making processes? Matters to consider include:
 - i. the treatment of sensitive information such as whakapapa, the location of mahinga kai, images and stories, and the potential for mātauranga to be used inappropriately for commercial benefit,
 - ii. improving the incorporation of tikanga Māori into EPA hearing processes,
 - iii. assisting Māori to understand what they may expect in a hearing situation, and what may be helpful in the preparation of a submission on any application before the EPA.
 - c. What further support is needed for EPA decision makers to effectively test and probe mātauranga evidence? Matters to consider include:
 - i. further exploration of the processes used by other judicial or quasi-judicial entities, such as the Māori Land Court, Waitangi Tribunal and the Environment Court that could support EPA decision makers (refer the work of the programme in 2018/19). Examples include, seeking expert advice from mātauranga practitioners in addition to submissions from Māori and guidance from kaumatua at a regional level to support decision makers,
 - ii. options on-going and alternative approaches to training for decision makers and EPA staff that would enable the growth of their cultural capability.
 - d. Following discussions at our joint strategy day, we look forward to looking at how He Whetū Mārama could further inform the policies, processes and decisions of the EPA. The framework, which guides the EPA in undertaking its statutory and other obligations to Māori, in both te reo Māori and English, is an example of mātauranga that was shared with the EPA by kaumatua from Te Herenga.

Conclusion

12. In conclusion, the Mātauranga Programme is in a very good place, however there is still a lot of work and challenges to come. Representatives from Ngā Kaihautū were fortunate to attend the hui with experts from Ngā Parirau and Matakīrea in April 2021 and can confirm similar feedback was provided during the hui.
13. For 2021/22, we look forward to the transition of the mātauranga programme to an enduring part of the way the EPA does its work. We also look forward to supporting the work to formally evaluate the programme using the measures of success that were developed in 2020-21, noting that this will happen in the financial year 2022-23, once a full year of implementation is complete.
14. Ngā Kaihautū is confident the programme, and the mātauranga framework that has been developed, will support the EPA and its decision makers to build their confidence and capability to test and probe mātauranga when presented as evidence.
15. The framework marks a significant rebalancing of the weight of evidence, be it from mātauranga, science, economics, or other sources. We have a strong belief that with the mātauranga framework in place, Māori will engage more with the processes of the EPA simply because the mātauranga they share will be accepted as evidence and probed as such.
16. E ngā rangatira, ngā kaimahi o te EPA, haere tonu te mahi, kia kaha tonu! To the leaders and staff of the EPA, continue the work, stay strong!



16 November 2021

Mavis Mullins
Tumuaki

Date



16 November 2021

Dr Daniel Hikuroa
Tumuaki Tuarua

Date