

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



23 MAR 2021

E ngā uri o Te Whakatōhea, tēnā koutou

Initialling the Whakatōhea deed of settlement

In September 2019, I wrote an open letter to you to announce the resumption of Treaty settlement negotiations with the Whakatōhea Pre-settlement Claims Trust (the Claims Trust).

Since then, the Claims Trust has been working hard to conclude negotiations on the draft deed of settlement. At the same time, Whakatōhea Wai claimants have represented Whakatōhea in the Waitangi Tribunal's North-Eastern Bay of Plenty district inquiry. I commend both the Claims Trust's and the Whakatōhea Wai claimants' commitment to achieving the best outcomes for Whakatōhea.

Many people within Whakatōhea have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of justice for the Crown's unconscionable invasion of your rohe and confiscation of your whenua. At times, and in good faith, Whakatōhea have held differing views on the best path forward in pursuit of these claims. That is why, when I announced the resumption of negotiations, I proposed the North-Eastern Bay of Plenty district inquiry be able to continue alongside and/or after a settlement.

The Claims Trust and Te Arawhiti are now finalising the deed of settlement. There are still outstanding details associated with valuation processes to address before it is finished. I remain committed to delivering the settlement as set out in the Agreement in Principle and providing the best possible outcome for Whakatōhea.

Once the deed of settlement has been initialled Whakatōhea will have the chance to vote on the settlement package through ratification. The ratification process will give you the opportunity to consider and discuss the settlement offer, and to vote on whether to accept the settlement. If the ratification shows strong support amongst Whakatōhea for the settlement, we will proceed to sign the deed.

The settlement legislation will enable the Waitangi Tribunal to complete hearings and issue a report about Whakatōhea claims against the Crown. If Whakatōhea accept the settlement, the Tribunal will still be able to make findings on historical claims. However, the settlement legislation will mean the Tribunal will not be able to make recommendations on historical claims. The Tribunal will be able to make findings and recommendations about contemporary (post-September 1992) issues included in any Whakatōhea Wai claim.

The Treaty settlement and the North-Eastern Bay of Plenty district inquiry together provide an opportunity to honour your tīpuna and create an enduring record of the history of the relationship between Whakatōhea and the Crown. The settlement presents an opportunity to build a prosperous future, in a renewed relationship with the Crown, for the benefit of all Whakatōhea.

I encourage you to participate in the ratification vote once the deed is initialled. I look forward to Whakatōhea and the Crown working together in a spirit of good faith, partnership and respect.

Nāku noa, nā

Hon Andrew Little
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Little', written over the printed name.