

TE KŌMIHANA WHAI HUA O AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

COLONISATION, RACISM AND WELLBEING

FINAL REPORT
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1.0 Introduction

If we are to maximise Aotearoa New Zealand's productivity, it is important that all of our citizens have equal opportunities to success, wellbeing, and the high quality of life that only some currently enjoy. We know that there are inequities in our system that prevent some New Zealanders from accessing these rights and we need to address any issues and barriers if we are to reach our potential as a country. Statistics and research tell us that Māori and Pacific people experience these inequities and are 'persistently disadvantaged' at greater rates than other groups. It is incumbent upon us as a nation to understand the causes of inequity and how we might address them.

For this reason, Te Kōmihana Whai Hua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Productivity Commission has been asked by the Government to undertake an Inquiry into the dynamics and drivers of persistent disadvantage and to make recommendations to help break or mitigate the cycle of disadvantage within people's lifetimes and across generations. An early submitter to the *A Fair Chance for All* inquiry explained the link between colonisation, racism, and the cycle of disadvantage like this:

"The significant losses of land, resources and culture experienced by Māori because of colonisation have been carried throughout generations, contributing to cycles of intergenerational trauma and disadvantage for many. This disadvantage is further exacerbated by the modern structures and systems in New Zealand, largely operating under a Western model."

For Māori who live in Aotearoa New Zealand, disadvantage is intertwined with the impacts of colonisation and racism. The story for Pacific peoples is different, but also has racism at its core. This paper seeks to develop our understanding of persistent disadvantage for Māori and Pacific peoples by exploring the relationship between colonisation, racism, wellbeing.

2.0 Colonisation, racism, wellbeing, productivity

The cycle of persistent disadvantage in Aotearoa New Zealand is a "wicked" problem – complex, important, and enduring. To address it we need to tackle gnarly issues of colonisation and racism and understand how they impact on wellbeing and productivity. We need to learn from our past if we are to do better and break the cycle of persistent disadvantage in the future. This means confronting our history and really understanding how it has contributed to the current inequalities, whether they be social, cultural, educational, or any other inequality that Māori and Pacific people continue to experience.

COLONISATION

Learning from history requires us to grapple with the concept of colonisation and how its representation and enactment has resulted in racist systems and practices. Colonisation is the process of actively settling (or setting up a colony) away from one's place of origin and establishing control over the indigenous people of that place. Typically, it involves mass movement of a population into an area and results in the original, or indigenous inhabitants being outnumbered and overtaken with the colonisers extending their system of control and governance into the new colony.

The colonisation process is inextricably linked to the international legal principle referred to as the 'Doctrine of Discovery'. Under this doctrine, when a European nation discovered new lands, it automatically gained sovereign and property rights over the non-European peoples, even though indigenous nations and people were already occupying and using the land (Miller et al., 2010, p. 3). This legal precedent was acknowledged by other European countries and was used by England to colonise several countries, including Aotearoa New Zealand.

In our case, the country was claimed via a treaty (cession) presented on nine sheets (eight in te reo Māori and one in English). The sheets travelled separately to different parts of Aotearoa New Zealand to be signed. The different versions led to variations in terminology and application — issues central to many of the conversations we continue to have today. Article 1 of the Māori language version saw Māori ceding ‘*kāwanatanga*’ (governance) to Queen Victoria. By contrast, through the English language version Māori cede ‘absolute sovereignty’. The term ‘*kāwanatanga*’ is a borrowing from the English ‘governance’, a notion that Māori had been introduced to only since the arrival of missionaries and the bible, and in the Declaration of Independence 1835 in which Māori chiefs agreed that the only ‘*kāwanatanga*’ to be recognised was their own, or that of people they appointed. The notion of sovereignty is, arguably, more closely aligned to the concept of mana, or tino rangatiratanga — absolute power and authority. Yet neither of those terms appear in Article 1.

Article 2 of the Māori language version uses ‘tino rangatiratanga’, guaranteeing Māori ‘full, exclusive, and undisturbed possession’ over their lands, villages and all of their treasures. These two terms, ‘*kāwanatanga*’ and ‘tino rangatiratanga’ and their application, have long been debated in our history.

The subsequent mass confiscation of lands was a direct breach of Article 2. As Jackson (2019, p.7) argues, the severing of tangata whenua (people of the land) from their land became one of the most successful colonisation strategies in Aotearoa New Zealand. Its success was such that many Māori continue, to this day, to be dislocated from their cultural homelands and effectively disconnected from a key source of cultural, social, economic, and personal wellbeing.

RACISM

At its essence, racism exists when one population believes that it is fundamentally superior and more advanced than another (or others) in all meaningful ways. As a concept, Jones (2000) identified and defined three different levels of racism: *institutional/systemic*, *interpersonal/personally mediated*, and *internalised* racism.

Institutional/Systemic – Racism occurs at a system level when those who are not in the privileged group do not have equal access to assets and opportunities because of their race. Institutional/Systemic racism is normative, is often legalised and manifests itself as inherent persistent disadvantage (p. 1212).

Interpersonal/Personally Mediated – Interpersonal or personally mediated racism occurs between individuals and/or larger groups and is often tangible, presenting as prejudice or discrimination. Jones (2000) distinguishes between prejudice and discrimination, “... *prejudice means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race, and discrimination means differential actions toward others according to their race*” (p. 1212).

Internalised – Racism becomes internalised when those who have experienced it accept the negative assumptions and lack of access to opportunities as the norm. This is “*acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth*” (p. 1213).

We do not have to look far to find examples of racism reported in newspapers or literature at each of these levels. For many Māori, racism is commonplace (Cormack et al., 2019), and is part of a lived experience. Pacific whānau continue to experience racism and discrimination. “Pacific youth are still being called ‘coconuts’ or ‘black bastards or bloody Islanders’ in our streets, in our workplaces, and in our schools” (Anae et al., 2015, p. 2).

When these three levels of racism come together to form a complex web of disadvantage, they surface most obviously as inequitable outcomes and negative statistics for Māori and Pacific peoples across our education, social, health and justice systems.

The Wai 718 report (1999) identified issues of systemic racism in our education system. Through its inquiry, the Waitangi Tribunal identified that Māori tertiary institutions had not received capital funding that other tertiary education providers received. The Tribunal also reported on evidence it had received which provided an account of how “past legislative action played a significant role in disadvantaging Māori within the State’s education system, leading to their under-representation in the statistics by which educational success is usually measured” (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 5).

In their research on improving educational outcomes for Māori students, Bishop et. al. (2003) found that deficit theorising¹ by teachers was one of the greatest impediments to Māori student achievement as it led to low expectations of Māori students and created a “downward spiralling, self-fulfilling prophecy of Māori student achievement and failure.” This is only one example of how interpersonal and internalised racism has become embedded in our behaviours and belief systems within the education system.

Individually and cumulatively these examples of systemic, interpersonal, and internalised racism lead to poor education outcomes for Māori students. The 1986 report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Māori language claim (Wai 11) explains the impact of poor education outcomes:

When such a system produces children who are not adequately educated, they are put at a disadvantage when they try to find work. If they cannot get work that satisfies them, they become unemployed and live on the dole. When they live on the dole, they become disillusioned, discontented, and angry. We saw such angry people giving evidence before us. They are no more than representatives of many others in our community (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 38).

While the examples above are drawn from the education system, the health, justice, and social systems could each offer further examples. The issues dealt with in the *Fair Chance for All* inquiry deal with system change, therefore the type of racism the inquiry needs to be considering most is that of the institutional/systemic kind.

WELLBEING

The cumulative and intergenerational effects of colonisation and racism present significant barriers to wellbeing for Māori and Pacific peoples today. Wellbeing has many facets, influenced and dictated by one’s lived experience in relation to culture, history, current events, social dynamics, and different worldviews.

Māori and Pacific models of wellbeing highlight its holistic nature and the interconnectedness of the elements in a whole wellbeing “system”. For example, the Treasury’s *He Ara Waiora* model, built on te ao Māori knowledge and perspectives, recognises wairua (spirit) and taiao (natural world) as central to the wellbeing of the person. Supporting this are four areas of ‘mana’ where people, and collectives, thrive:

- *Mana Tuku Iho* – A strong sense of identity and belonging.
- *Mana Tauutuutu* – Participation and connection with their communities.
- *Mana Āheinga* – Capability to decide on their aspirations.

¹ Deficit theorising places the “blame” for poor achievement on students and their whānau. It fails to recognise the critical role of teachers in student outcomes.

- *Mana Whanake* – Have the power to grow sustainable, intergenerational prosperity. (The Treasury Te Tai Ōhanga, 2021).

The Fonofale model describes a Pacific concept of health and wellbeing (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). In this model, wellbeing is depicted as a fale (house) in which the roof represents Culture: cultural values and beliefs as the shelter for life and the floor represents the Family. Connecting the roof and the floor are four posts, each representing a dimension of wellbeing:

- *Spiritual* – the sense of wellbeing which comes from a belief system (e.g., Christianity) that drives spirituality relating to nature, language, beliefs, and history.
- *Physical* – the relationship between one’s physical self and substances that influence wellbeing (e.g., food, water, air).
- *Mental* – the behaviours expressed by the individual and the health of the mind (e.g., thinking and emotions).
- *Other* – All other factors that directly or indirectly impact wellbeing (e.g., age, employment, education).

Like Māori models of health and wellbeing, including Durie’s well-documented 1984 Te Whare Tapa Whā model (Durie, 1998), the Fonofale model acknowledges the interrelatedness of the dimensions. The holistic nature of these models means that individual measures cannot be taken in isolation – elements are interconnected and impact on each other in either positive or negative ways. Some of these more salient negative impacts of a lack of wellbeing can be seen in the statistical profile of Māori and Pacific peoples in reports on the criminal justice system, education outcomes, housing, employment, and income levels and need to be considered in any discussion about the wellbeing of Māori and Pacific peoples (Durie, 2011; Jackson, 2019; Kukutai, 2011; Reid, 2011; Smith, 2012; Walker, 2004).

THE IMPACT OF COLONISATION AND RACISM ON WELLBEING

The *Fonofale* and *He Ara Waiora* models help us to unpack some of the impacts of colonisation and racism on wellbeing. Central to the holistic views presented in these models is culture and identity – the language (reo), knowledge (mātauranga), cultural practices (tikanga) and connections (to others and land) that differentiate one person or one people from others. Practices of colonisation and racism have led to massive land losses and the near-death of the Māori language.

Loss of Land

Ties to the land and the environment are critical to both the physical and spiritual health of Māori. For Māori, land (whenua) is a taonga – a treasure that we inherit and have guardianship responsibility to and for. This whenua provides security, sustenance, tūrangawaewae (a place to stand), and forms a significant part of our economic base as a people, thus, contributing to many of the aspects of wellbeing outlined above in the *He Ara Waiora* model. Initially, colonisation was about acquiring land “to ease the burgeoning population of Britain and to generate wealth for British settlers” (Gillies, 2011, p. 197), and like many other colonised nations, indigenous populations occupied land that colonisers wanted. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Māori made up the entire population and had authority and control over 100% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s land resource. This control of land resource remained the case right through until 1840, when Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed. Today, Māori account for 15% of the population, however, own only 5% of Aotearoa New Zealand’s land resource (Thom & Grimes, 2022).

The loss of land for Māori meant a loss of identity and belonging, a loss of power to grow intergenerational prosperity, and an inability to make decisions based on their own aspirations (Thom

& Grimes, 2022, p. 3). Legal instruments used to enact this are detailed later in this paper. The impacts of historical loss of land and the erosion of a significant economic base continue to be felt in terms of the socio-economic wellbeing of Māori and the housing ownership challenge faced by Māori today. Further compounding the home-ownership issue is the collective ownership model under which Māori land is typically held, making it difficult to secure financing to develop and build homes on this land. This has served to further erode the potential for progressive Māori home ownership in our current environment.

Loss of Language

The importance of language to any culture cannot be overstated — it is the basis from which identity, belonging, and self-determination builds. The removal of a people from their language is to remove their identity and culture. For colonising groups, the deliberate removal of language from an indigenous culture was central to the colonising process and both political and legislative action was taken in Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure that this happened (further explored in Section 3.0). How this looks for Māori and Pacific peoples in the 21st century can depend on how removed they are from their language and, therefore, their culture and identity. For some, this presents as “language trauma” and a sense of isolation within society – not fitting into their own culture nor into the culture of “mainstream” Pākehā New Zealanders (Olsen-Reeder, 2021).

Impact on Health

The impact of colonisation on the health of indigenous peoples (including Māori) is well documented. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the reasons for these negative statistics range from the early exposure to new illnesses, guns, alcohol, and tobacco during the colonisation process (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019), the establishment of Western paradigms of healthcare that failed to account for indigenous holistic models of wellbeing, and more latterly, market-driven reforms to the provision of health services that limit access to user-pays.

One cause, in particular, of the difference in health outcomes between Māori and non-Māori, is the rate of smoking amongst Māori, which continues to be much higher than that of non-Māori. Prior to colonisation, Māori did not engage in smoking (Reid & Pouwhare, 1991). Smoking was introduced to Māori during the early stages of colonisation where tobacco was used as a source of exchange for goods and services. Following its introduction, smoking for Māori was not restricted by age or gender, as it was for non-Māori. The persistent outcome has been high smoking rates which continue to drive negative health effects today – ‘... *Māori and Pacific peoples continue to be disproportionately burdened by smoking-related morbidity and mortality*’ (Walsh & Wright, 2020). Williams (2018) argues that the marginalisation of Māori and the development of current non-Māori smoking cessation interventions only serves to place greater burden on Māori and that until interventions are developed using a Māori worldview these inequities will remain.

Impact on Wellbeing

Massive loss and erosion of the foundations of wellbeing have contributed to Māori and Pacific people being more likely to experience persistent disadvantage than other groups in our society. Language loss coupled with the loss of a significant economic base such as land have had a significant negative impact on wellbeing.

This situation is exacerbated further through inequities such as ethnic pay gaps which see Māori and Pacific men and women earning less than Pākehā men and women. The Pacific Pay Gap Inquiry launched by the Human Rights Commission in 2020 has identified that, on average, Pacific people earn

between 24-27 percent less than Pākehā men. The gap is only slightly smaller for Māori men and women who earn on average between 20-23 percent less than Pākehā men (Human Rights Commission, n.d.). While conditions such as these persist, negatively impacting the wellbeing and potential of New Zealanders, we will continue to see Māori and Pacific people overrepresented in statistics on persistent disadvantage.

3.0 A history of political and legislative action

Our current state of productivity as a nation has been enabled through a history of political engineering and key legislative practices that have impacted negatively on the wellbeing and productivity of Māori and Pacific peoples.

THE INITIAL PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE

In the 1800's, Māori and Pākehā started to formalise a partnership. Two key documents from that era remain critically important:

1835 – He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī (The Declaration of Independence): This document, endorsed by the British parliament (Durie, 2011, p. 393), was created by a group of rangatira to embed and recognise Māori sovereignty. This is a significant document in our history and has also been seen as a lens through which to envision constitutional change in a contemporary context.

1840 – Te Tiriti o Waitangi: This document (in Māori and English) is a distinguishing feature of the colonisation process and continues to hold a central position in ongoing political and socio-economic issues in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The signing of both Te Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tirenī and Te Tiriti o Waitangi were strategic for Māori. There was a growing awareness of the urgency to embed strategies which ensured that Māori were treated fairly and equitably in their own land. Unfortunately, these strategies were accorded lip-service at best. Assimilation tools enacted through Government policy can be seen throughout our history (Walker, 2004; Durie, 2005) and have ensured that the unequal position which Māori now occupy can be traced back to the very beginning of colonisation and the endeavour for a partnership relationship.

KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Key policy and legislative actions and inactions have resulted in the erosion of Māori economic assets, power, and resource. For example, the loss of land and language discussed earlier was enabled through the adoption of key pieces of legislation. The 1847 Education Ordinance Act and the 1862 Native Lands Act are two of the more commonly known pieces of legislation that have had a direct and long-lasting impact.

1847 – Education Ordinance Act: Introduced by Governor Grey, this Act effectively outlawed the use of Māori language and required all instruction in schools to be solely in English (Walker, 2004). This subsequently led to many children being physically punished for speaking te reo Māori at school. This Act initiated the subsequent loss of language, where te reo Māori went from being the primary language of Aotearoa New Zealand to a language close to extinction. This was a key contributor to the resulting deracination of Māori from their culture and identity leading into the early 1900's.

1862 – Native Lands Act: The 1862 Native Lands Act and subsequent establishment of the Native Land Court was a blunt instrument used to sever the connection of Māori to their land (Walker, 2004). The court's function was to ensure that most of the land in Aotearoa was

within the reach of colonisation and brought with it the custom that no more than 10 parties could be owners of a land block. This meant that those not named as owners but who had whakapapa and customary rights to the land were not, and are still not, legally recognised today (Thom & Grimes, 2022). This Act aimed to disrupt the tribal structure that Māori society was based upon and “to destroy, if it were possible, the principle of communism upon which their social system is based and which stands as a barrier in the way of all attempts to amalgamate the Māori race into our social and political system” (Sewell as cited in Taonui, 2012).

These examples are but a few of a wider body of political and legislative action that embedded racist policies into our systems and practices over the past two centuries.

OPERATION POT BLACK

While the examples set out above serve to represent a wider body of political and legislative action against Māori, there are examples, too, of discriminatory actions against Pacific people that have, and continue, to impact negatively on their wellbeing and productivity. The ‘Dawn Raids’ is the prime example which continues to cast a shadow over our shared history.

1974 – 1976 Dawn Raids: Between 1945–1973, a boom in economic growth required an increase in the Aotearoa New Zealand workforce. A labour shortage was met primarily through increasing numbers of women in the workforce, urban migration of Māori from rural centres, and immigration of unskilled workers from the Pacific Islands (Ongley, 1996). Workers from Pacific countries entered New Zealand under informal and family-based ‘guest-worker’-type schemes and provided a welcome labour source to support the economy. However, an economic downturn in the 1970’s drove a perception that Pacific peoples were responsible for job shortages and social ills. From 1974–1976, a government campaign to remove people who had overstayed their visas targeted these workers. ‘Operation Pot Black’ saw random police checking of ‘brown’ people’s passports and the operation known as the ‘Dawn Raids’ (de Bres, 2022). Police raids, sometimes involving police dogs, were usually carried out in the early hours of the morning on whānau who were suspected of being overstayers. The raids were traumatic and occurred mainly on the homes of Pacific families in Auckland, many of whom were either here legally or were citizens. In 2021, the Government formally apologised to the communities and individuals impacted by the Dawn Raids. The press release at the time stated, ‘... *the Dawn Raids period cast a shadow over our shared history. Upholding immigration laws is one thing, but the Dawn Raids went well beyond that. Whole communities felt targeted and terrorised. The raids were discriminatory*’ (Beehive, 2021).

4.0 The cumulative impact across multiple generations

The historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism continue to be felt by Māori and Pacific people today. The lived experience of many Māori today are the cumulative result of breaches of pre-existing rights afforded under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Stories of intergenerational trauma, inequitable access to assets, homelessness, and migration to the cities to find work, along with low levels of te reo Māori speakers and poor health and wellbeing statistics are outcomes of our colonial history (Thom & Grimes, 2022).

CONTEMPORARY POLICIES

Aotearoa New Zealand’s current and historical social, political, legislative, and environmental context has led to a loss of trust from Māori and Pacific people in ‘the system’. That our system continues to be driven by colonial power structures built on a set of assumptions and biases that continue to

reinforce existing inequities is a critical issue that we need to address – but it will take courage and commitment across political, social, and economic landscapes.

As a country we have made a start. The place of identity, language, and culture as foundational to the wellbeing and success of Māori and Pacific people is now being acknowledged across our system. The validity of mātauranga Māori is increasingly being recognised and valued (albeit with a large amount of debate and dissension) in education, health, and social services, and legislation and government policies designed to combat the impact of earlier practices of colonisation have been introduced. In the last few decades, for example, we have seen several examples of this change in direction:

1980 – The Waitangi Tribunal established (through the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975): Set up as a standing commission of inquiry to address Crown breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Tribunal provides recommendations to Government based on extensive investigations (Waitangi Tribunal Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, n.d.). Initially only able to address claims lodged after October 1975, since 1985 the Tribunal has had the mandate to investigate claims back to 1840.

1993 – Te Ture Whenua Māori Act: In contrast to previous legislation severing the tie between Māori and their land, this Act legislated Māori land as an asset to be held in trust for future generations and “the land court was required to retain Māori land in Māori ownership wherever possible” (Durie, 2005, p. 62). This Act places restrictions on how Māori land can be utilised, promoting land being used for the (financial) benefit of the owners – a goal which can challenge the cultural obligation of kaitiakitanga (guardians of the land) promoting obligation, sustainability, and nurture for the wellbeing of people and the environment (Moewaka Barnes et al., 2018).

While the establishment of The Waitangi Tribunal and the adoption of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act serve to shed a light on some of the more positive contemporary policies which suggest that we have seen a change in direction, we continue to see present day examples which suggest that we still have a way to go.

2019 – Wai 2575 Hauora Report: This Waitangi Tribunal investigation into the health sector found significant inequities in primary health care (Ministry of Justice, 2019). The investigation identified inadequate funding, inadequate clarification within the Act² to Te Tiriti obligations and a failure by the Crown to collect sufficient qualitative or quantitative data to fully inform itself on how the primary health care sector is performing in relation to Māori health. The Tribunal received empirical evidence of Māori being the subject of institutional/systemic racism in relation to public health funding, and to greater levels of monitoring, reporting, and auditing (Came, 2013). Love et. al. (2021) estimated the annual health loss for Māori under five-years old and those between 45 – 64 years to be \$5 billion per annum.

2021 – Covid-19 Vaccinations: The identified lack of data collection by the Crown was further exposed during the vaccine rollout process of the Covid-19 pandemic (Whitehead et al., 2021). The country’s vaccine rollout largely ignored population variations or issues of access for (particularly) Māori and Pacific people. The age-based policy appeared to be reasonable and fair, prioritising our vulnerable elderly. In effect, however, due to a median age much younger than their Pākehā counterparts, the policy left many vulnerable Māori and Pacific people without access to the vaccine for months. In the context of data which indicated that on

² The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000

average, Māori who become infected are approximately twice as likely as non-Māori to die with Covid-19, this policy had a hugely negative effect on Māori and Pacific communities (Te Pūnaha Matatini, 2020). Māori and Pacific responses involved mobilising communities across the country (including marae, iwi healthcare providers, and community organisations) to leverage relationships with “a common purpose of protecting the community from the onslaught of the global pandemic” (McMeeking et al., 2020, p. 396).

The impact that these changes in policy and government direction have on the wellbeing and productivity of those affected has yet to be measured across the system. And there is still a long way to go if we are to address the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacific peoples in all negative statistics. What we do know however, is that to not do anything, to not disrupt the cycle of persistent disadvantage results in a cost that the country cannot afford socially or economically — and it is no longer who we are as a nation.

5.0 Moving forward – recommendations for the inquiry

“...what we believe is needed more than anything is a change in mindset – a shift from the ‘old’ approach that valued only one founding culture to one in which the other is equally supported and promoted, and the advantage New Zealand would hold by its embrace of both (along with newer cultures from other lands) is widely recognised.”

(Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, p. 245)

To raise the wellbeing of Māori and Pacific people, we must find ways to work together where both indigenous and non-indigenous parties are equally supported and recognised. The Māori and Pacific responses to the Covid-19 rollout provide us with several key learnings in our combat against a cycle of persistent disadvantage:

- While the current system serves the many, there are still those who the system fails to engage.
- To reach those who don’t engage in ‘the system’, a localised approach can be effective.
- By-Māori-for-Māori and by-Pacific-for-Pacific solutions are critical and often also work for non-Māori and non-Pacific.
- Ensuring wellbeing for Māori and Pacific people and tackling disadvantage requires a mutual respect and sharing of power and control.

There is a significant opportunity cost for the government in ignoring these learnings and not taking an authentic approach to embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi into the fabric of our system. Existing inequities which reinforce the persistent disadvantages experienced by Māori and Pacific people can be addressed through true partnership. This means:

- Working alongside the communities for whom the relevant policies serve (e.g., by-Māori-for-Māori approaches).
- Appropriate devolution of funding and resources across our key sectors (e.g., education, social, and justice).
- Forming partnerships that will enable and sustain robust dialogue when needed.
- Decisions should be made by-Māori-for-Māori and by-Pacific-for-Pacific.
- Co-decision-making on issues affecting the country.
- Ensuring that appropriate data is being collected in order to support decisions that affect Māori and Pacific people.
- Targets and measures need to include things that matter to Māori and Pacific peoples.

Importantly, equality and equity will not be realised within the current system. New systems and structures designed ‘by-Māori for-Māori’ and ‘by-Pacific for-Pacific’ are required for these outcomes to be realised. The Māori Health Authority | Te Mana Hauora Māori sits as a promising example of a new system and structure that looks to provide Māori with better outcomes and greater self-determination over their own health and wellbeing – and is an acknowledgement that this is not currently being realised within the current health system.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Technical Working Group for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) vocalised what many have known for a long time — that tinkering around the edges of a system that is not working will only continue to result in the same outcomes, the same statistics, the same lack of wellbeing, and ultimately the same cycle of persistent disadvantage. If we are to move forward together as an ‘Aotearoa’ New Zealand, we must be brave, we must be innovative, and we must address the barriers to wellbeing created by colonisation and racism.

“... being brave can sound like a difficult thing to do. But I look back on the history of our people, and particularly since 1840, and if there’s anything that has marked the survival and the flourishing of our people, it’s that we have been brave...”

(Dr Moana Jackson cited in Tukaki, 2021)

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