

# Te Mana o te Wai – Industry Kōrero

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## ABSTRACT

At the 2023 Stormwater Conference, the Water New Zealand - Te Mana o te Wai sub-committee hosted a workshop with the purpose of encouraging participants to look at their own mahi and how they can meaningfully give effect to Te Mana o te Wai. An outcome of the workshop, which was well attended, was to take the kōrero of the attendees and give a summary in the form of a paper at the following years conference. This is to ensure that the insights and discussions that were held are able to be built on and discussed, something that is of high importance as the political space is everchanging.

The workshop started with some inspirational kōrero from Dr Kepa Morgan and Troy Brockbank to set the scene and give examples of their journeys and where/how they have felt the support of the water industry. Their kōrero laid a foundation of what can happen when there is trust and mutual respect and was a great way to lay the platform for the rest of the workshop.

## Methodology

After the initial kōrero from our guests, the workshopping element of the session occurred. This involved a representative from the Te Mana o te Wai sub-committee facilitating a session at a table each of attendees. The prompts/questions that were chosen represent barriers that have been identified in our industry delivering Te Mana o te Wai in the operational space. The idea being that as these were workshopped, the barriers were softened and reduced, with suggestions on how to work around them. The prompts that were asked of attendees were:

- Mahi Tahi (working together)
- Communication Barriers - How do you meaningfully communicate with Tangata Whenua?
- How do we change our immediate planning to generational planning?

The attendees were asked to critically look at their own mahi and how they are currently achieving each of the themes in the context of Te Mana o te Wai, and how they can better improve going forward. It was an open kōrero amongst the table, each table going in different directions and taking unique paths. The results were really interesting, especially when compared against each other.

## Results

The comments associated to all three prompts were captured and broken down into two overarching categories – **Barriers** and **Changes to Long Term Plans**. All of the comments were then broken down further, with the amount of comments associated into sub-categories (quantity and percentage shown):

Barriers:		
#	%	Theme of comment
30	41%	Trust Building
20	27%	Value Māori Time
12	16%	Establish Early
8	11%	Community Building
4	5%	Miscellaneous

Change to LTP:		
#	%	Theme of comment
6	60%	Te Ao Māori
4	40%	Building Community Together

## Discussion

Each prompt had a significant amount of comments associated, as seen in the tables above. I will break down each prompt and summarise the comments, looking at what was said, and how the water industry as a whole may be able to follow through on the words. *Tē tōia, tē haumatia - Nothing can be achieved without a plan, workforce and a way of doing things.* While the kōrero was fantastic and enriching, the real importance is how it is actioned, and more importantly – clear plans on exactly how to do that. All of these prompts have been identified as essential in order to genuinely deliver Te Mana o te Wai.

### *Mahi Tahi (Working together/Collaboration)*

Te Mana o te Wai is about prioritising the mana and wairua of wai. Secondary is the benefit to people and the commercial output water can provide. In order to do this, the water industry as a whole needs to understand Te Ao Maori values including (but not limited to) mana, tapu, noa, and mauri, and the connection of these values to wai. What does it mean to keep these values at the centre of your mahi, and how can we all continue to improve our way of working as guided by Te Mana o te Wai? It is the authors understanding that only Māori can genuinely understand the mana of wai, specifically the Mana Whenua of the wai you are trying to improve. They hold the mana for their lands and waters and are the ultimate kaitiaki. Therefore, in order to genuinely deliver on Te Mana o te Wai, the partnership with Mana Whenua to guide and lead the appropriate outcomes and actions is a necessity.

The Water Industry does incredible work – the improvement to Aotearoa’s waterways, water systems and receiving environments has been clear over the years. There are definitely examples of programmes that have worked in partnership with Tangata Whenua and delivered Te Mana o te Wai, however, the number is still too small. Government agencies have an obligation to deliver the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and while this is a mandated requirement, there needs to be more clarification on how exactly this is achieved. Crown employees change through the years, but iwi stay the same, so how do we ensure that the relationships are lasting and strong within the agencies. One way that was suggested by the attendees was employing more Māori Specialists within Crown agencies, to ensure that there is upskilling internally. Tikanga is crucial when working with Tangata Whenua, it must be taught by those that understand and live it, hence Māori Specialists to guide and whakamana/empower their colleagues is a clear option going forward.

### *Communication Barriers - How do you meaningfully communicate with Tangata Whenua?*

A lot of the kōrero around this prompt was about relationships and the need to build trust. Relationships are reciprocal and don’t happen overnight – it is often through showing that you can actually deliver the promises that our industry so often make. Reciprocal is a key word, we can often go into these relationships looking at what we want from Tangata Whenua, but assuming that the outcomes we are trying to achieve is synonymous with what that iwi/Māori group’s aspirations are is arrogance and unfortunately, something that happens often. First listen - *kia Rongo ā wairua, ā tinana.* Listening to iwi aspirations first and seeing how we can work together to achieve mutual outcomes is a flip of our current approach (generally). Trust is built over time – *kanohi ki te kanohi,* meeting face to face and showing the genuine intention to build a connection.

Our mahi is fast paced, we want to achieve the outcomes quickly as the next work programme is already knocking at the door. This does not fit in with the Te Ao Māori approach, and as a result can be seen as ‘too hard’ to engage meaningfully. Tangata Whenua will wānanga and ensure they have given their kōrero and whakaaro through a thorough and respectful path. Te Ao Māori honours their

Rangatira and Kaumatua/Kuia as they are the holders of the Kōrero Tuku Iho (historical stories/ information/ etc.), which are the foundation of their current positions. It is a recommendation that as an industry, we make a commitment to genuinely partner with Tangata Whenua, not only will we make space for these wānanga (and participate if invited) within our project timeframes, but resource it accordingly. This means not just their time for attendance at hui or wānanga, but for the kōrero with their elders if required. By doing this it is showing how much we value their input and that we are being honest in our commitment to delivering Te Mana o te Wai. It is also showing that we respect the tikanga of the iwi/Māori group we are working with. Iwi are time poor, so working together from the outset of projects, and providing the adequate resource and timeframes is the only way to make space for genuine partnership.

*How do we change our immediate planning to generational planning?*

The kōrero from this prompt was generally the most complex of the workshop. It was widely understood that Tangata Whenua think intergenerationally, but the Water Industry can be very reactive based on political environments and/or the response to environmental events. How then, do we as a collective look long term while dealing with the current requirements? Currently, we rely on data - Western Science is ever evolving and growing, and is instrumental in all of the successful improvements to water quality. Whereas Mātauranga Māori is the past, current and future knowledge of Tangata Whenua. It is complex, rich and full of crucial information of the whenua and wai. The integration of both knowledge paradigms can be extremely challenging, but when done in a respectful way, that is informed and driven by Tangata Whenua, can provide outcomes that will only benefit all involved and be part of the answer in working with a generational lense. As detailed above, reciprocity is key when working with iwi and fundamental to delivering Te Mana o te Wai.

While working with Tangata Whenua and trying to weave Western Science and Mātauranga Māori into project outcomes is a really positive way of ensuring intergenerational change, it is not as simple as requesting information from the iwi you are working with. Mātauranga Māori is sacred information, that is passed down from Māori elders – it is different for each iwi, and guided by tikanga and Kōrero Tuku Iho. Iwi hold that information and it is often not appropriate for anyone outside of iwi to know. Therefore, the relationship with Mana Whenua is the most important thing – once there is trust, Mātauranga Māori may be gifted, or the iwi representatives may be able to interweave it into a project. As such, it is not simple and changes iwi to iwi.

## **Conclusion**

The workshop was full of great kōrero and the collective insights from the attendees painted a really positive picture for the future of the Water Industry. It also showed, through the complex and rich conversations how challenging and how much mahi this picture will take to paint. Further work needs to be done to better understand how to operationalise Te Mana o te Wai - something that is as important as ever before with the current political climate, and something that is luckily, a commitment many have made to achieve.