

E te kaiwhakarite i a tātou i roto i ngā ahuatanga whakawairua, tēnā koe Dr Hond.

E ngā rau rangatiraa mā, koutou ngā ruānuku, ngā kuia, ngā kaihautu, ngā kaikōrero ō tēnā whaitua, o tēnā whaitua, nei rā te reo aumihi e rere atu nei ki a koutou, mai i a mātou o te Roopu Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi. Nau mai haere mai ki tēnei whenua taurikura o rātou te mana whenua – ko Te Atiawa i te tuatahi, me ōna hoa heke mai raro ko Ngāti Toa, ko Ngāti Raukawa.

Kei te haere tonu ngā mihi ki a koutou o Te Tumu Herenga Waka me ō koutou manaakitanga ki a mātou kua tae mai i runga i te karanga o te rā. E kore mātou e taea ki te mutunga o mātou whakawhetai ki a koutou, nā te mea kua huakina mai koutou tēnei wharenuī ataahua me tōnā hoa ki tōna taha.

Ōtira, koutou katoa nau mai haere mai. Kuhu mai i ngā tatau ō tēnei huihuinga Ko te Tōrino: Haere Whakamua, Haere Whakamuri.

Welcome to this Conference entitled Ko te Tōrino: Haere Whakamua, Haere Whakamuri. The name of the conference was chosen by Waitangi Tribunal member, Derek Fox and his wife Jaewynn Mckay. Translated into English it means “The spiral that moves forward and back” This is a whakatauki that speaks to how the Waitangi Tribunal carries the past into the future. It is an appropriate name for a

conference which today will reflect on the work of the Waitangi Tribunal over the last 50 years, critically examining its early years, the vision of those who were there from the start, the Tribunal's contribution to Treaty settlements, iwi development, and New Zealand politics and policy. Tomorrow speakers will compare and contrast the Waitangi Tribunal against international models for hearing indigenous claims and the lessons we have learnt to date. The voice of rising leaders will highlight emerging issues to consider and finally speakers will traverse what the future for the Waitangi Tribunal may be.

You may ask, why was this conference organised. The reason is that many assume the value of the Waitangi Tribunal to be self-evident. I confess that when I became a presiding officer in 2000, I initially made this assumption. But if the Waitangi Tribunal is to continue to discharge its statutory function it requires an informed social, cultural and political environment that understands its value as the only forum where Treaty of Waitangi claims by Māori can be fully examined.

It must also be able to demonstrate how it is expediting the hearing of such claims and clearly explain how the end of its two main work streams are within reach – 2030 for all historical claims and 2035 for all kaupapa inquiries. My point is that we are obliged to explain the Waitangi Tribunal's purpose, and its work programme, not just assert the Tribunal's importance.

The 50th anniversary of the Tribunal is the obvious opportunity to do this. There is already much information on our website, in our annual reports, our inquiry reports and in our *Strategic Direction 2025-203* - all available online. I invite you to review the Tribunal's site.

So this conference is an opportunity to hear from others about what they consider the Waitangi Tribunal's purpose to be. From all their contributions we should be able to discern themes that can be used to enhance public understanding, Crown scrutiny, and claimant confidence. So, I thank all the speakers for taking on this task.

With that in mind, I turn now to introduce our first keynote speaker. He is of Rangitāne, Ngāti Kauwhata, Ngāti Raukawa descent. I understand, and he can correct me if I am wrong, he was born in my home town of Gisborne, educated at Te Aute College and at Victoria University graduating with BA/LL.B in 1964. At Victoria he was president of the New Zealand Federation of Māori Students. From 1965-1974, he was a senior partner at Dillon Gooch & Durie Barristers & Solicitors, Tauranga. In 1974 he was appointed a Judge of the Māori Land Court and in 1981 he took up the appointments of Chief Judge of the Māori Land Court and Chair of the Waitangi Tribunal. He is the man that shaped the Waitangi Tribunal from 1981-1999 when he left to take on the role of a High Court judge and later a Law Commissioner. His contribution to our nation has been recognised by three universities, Victoria, Waikato and Massey who have each respectively

awarded him with honorary doctorates. We are honoured he is with us today – ladies and gentlemen put your hands together for the Honourable Sir Edward Taihakurei Durie KNZM.