

## **Ahu Moana – what is it and what might it mean for Aotea?**

We all know our moana is in trouble; over many years we've witnessed the marked decline in its mauri, environmental quality and resources. There's been a lot of talk about what to do about this - mostly all talk. Now is the time to find solutions and take action. The exciting part of this is a new concept called Ahu Moana (meaning to "foster/ tend to the ocean"), which puts decision-making power into the hands of mana whenua and the community. Aotea/ Great Barrier has been earmarked by Government as a location for an Ahu Moana pilot. This is our chance to call the shots and determine our own solutions to the problem. We "sat down" with Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board chair Izzy Fordham and Ngāti Rehua Ngātiwai ki Aotea Trust Board chairperson Opo Ngawaka, to get the low-down on Ahu Moana.

### **IZZY**

**In your view, what is Ahu Moana and what might it mean for people?** Ahu Moana is a perfect concept for Aotea. It's a mechanism whereby mana whenua and the community work together in a formal partnership to co-manage our coastal areas. It gives a holistic aspect to protecting our moana and enabling species in decline to recover - a win-win for us all.

**What is the Board's role?** The Local Board's role is one of support and to act as a conduit between mana whenua, the community and agencies such as MPI and DoC. We're thrilled that Aotea Great Barrier Island has been selected as one of the pilot areas for this scheme known as Ahu Moana and the opportunities it can bring.

**How important is it that the community gets behind these efforts?** If we, as a community, are as concerned as what the Board has heard then it's imperative that we get behind this pilot. This is such an incredible opportunity to solve an island problem, on island terms.

**How can people get involved?** There have already been a couple of excellent hui organized by the Protect Turi Point group and these have given us some indication of the level of interest in the Ahu Moana concept. There will be a wider community hui held on one of our marae when COVID levels allow. This will be organized and led by Ngati Rehua Ngatiwai ki Aotea Trust Board and I would encourage anyone interested in finding out more about Ahu Moana and rahui to make the effort and attend. Technical people from MPI and DoC will be present at the hui to hear our views and help guide us through the process as we formulate our own plans

**Do you think islanders are ready for what could potentially be an island-wide rahui restricting access to certain species?** In all honesty, yes I do. I think we've all witnessed many years of pillaging by visitors to our shores and we've had enough. Besides what the Hauraki Gulf Forum's *State of the Environment Reports* continuously tell us about the degradation of the Gulf, we have anecdotal evidence from our residents that tell us what their experience has been over many years and it ain't good - depletion, depletion, depletion. The time is right to change all that for the better.

### **OPO**

**If you had to sum up the state of our moana, what would you say?**

The moana is like a kete. As of right now that kete is being emptied without any attempt to replenish its contents.

**What is the iwi trust board's take on Ahu Moana? Is it the answer to the problem?**

The Trust Board believes that an approach which embodies our tikanga principles is the correct way to address this issue. Ahu Moana is a creative approach to protecting the moana. It supports mana whenua and community groups to create a strategy that reflects their beliefs, customs, environments, and realities to achieve an overall goal of marine restoration and protection.

**What is the link between Ahu Moana and rāhui, which we know is also a marine protection tool?**

Rāhui is one of a range of customary tools (others include Mahinga mataitai and Taiapure) used for the purposes of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga. In an Ahu Moana context, this tool is a vehicle that can be applied for the purpose of regeneration in an area.

The effect of a rāhui is not only restrictive through prohibition but also positive in enabling/encouraging restorative activities such as; reseeding kaimoana beds and managing kina barrens.

**Over and above the rahui already in place in Okupu and Tryphena to fight the Caulerpa brachypus incursion, is it possible more rahui will be put in place as part of community efforts to restore our moana?**

The current rāhui in Okupu and Tryphena are examples of the versatility of this customary tool. In those cases rāhui is applied to protect our marine life. Upon advice from our kaumatua, rāhui may be considered an appropriate mechanism to restore the moana in other areas of Aotea.

**What sort of rahui? One that covered parts of the island or the island as a whole?**

The extent of a rāhui is determined by kaumatua. Consideration is given to various factors such as: seriousness of the kaupapa, impact on haukainga and community members, etc. The proposed area for a rāhui is island wide. However, upon kaumatua advice this may be reconsidered and edited to better reflect tikanga and other relevant matters.

**What sort of species might be included in a rāhui?**

The following three species have been identified as at risk:

- Koura/Crayfish
- Tipa/Scallops
- Paua/Abalone

However, after further consultation with the community and haukainga this list could be expanded to include other species. Rahui as a tool is also applied by iwi in Coromandel and also Waiheke on specific species.

**Who decides a rahui? What is the process?**

Rāhui are set down by the kaumatua of a rohe/area. The initial process is for them to hui/meet and discuss the reasoning for a rāhui and the process that must be followed to apply the rāhui. This is to ensure the mana of the rāhui is upheld. As tikanga is flexible it could be that the rahui is extended, lifted and/or moved.

**What are next steps for the iwi trust board in relation to all this?**

As soon as COVID restrictions allow, our kaumatua group will meet. Once that has happened, the Trust Board will take steps, informed by the kaumatua group, to implement and enforce the decision of the kaumatua group. Further steps will include meeting with both haukainga and community members to discuss the process.

If you have any questions regarding the iwi trust board's Ahu Moana work, please contact Taumata Toki - [taumata.toki@gmail.com](mailto:taumata.toki@gmail.com).