



MEDIA RELEASE – 27 FEBRUARY 2024

NGĀTI KAHUNGUNU SLAMS THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF TE AKA WHAI ORA

Ngāti Kahungunu Chair Bayden Barber has slammed the coalition government's moves to disestablish Te Aka Whaiora, The Māori Health Authority, "This is a rash move from the government, disestablishing a model that was designed to shift resources out of a mainstream system that has been failing Māori for decades."

Barber, who served as the first Māori chair for Health Hawke's Bay PHO has been a staunch advocate for prioritising Māori Health investment. "We were very deliberate to prioritise Māori first, why?, because the evidence is very clear that Māori do not receive the same access to health care that others do, and as a result, our health statistics are seriously behind in every major health category."

Ngāti Kahungunu held a hui-ā-iwi at Waimārama Marae on December 16, 2023, where the disestablishment of Te Aka Whaiora was a key point of concern, "The health and wellbeing of our tamariki, rangatahi, pakeke and kaumātua is of utmost importance to Ngāti Kahungunu", says Barber. "Our people see this as a huge step backwards and a clear statement that Māori are not a priority for this government."

He was fortunate to have visited the South Central Foundation in Alaska where they have managed to stem the tide of negative health statistics for their indigenous First Nations people. Barber comments, "They are very bold in their approach to improving the health of their First Nations people. They don't hide the fact that it starts with where the investment is targeted. Te Aka Whaiora is that "bold" statement for improving Māori health outcomes in Aotearoa, New Zealand."

"We have some of the country's most deprived communities within Ngāti Kahungunu. My challenge to this government is to ensure that communities are engaged and resourced appropriately to fully implement their Locality Plans and complete the mahi that has already started."

Barber is also troubled by the speed in which this bill has gone through, "We have not had an opportunity to air our views on the proposed changes. Our whanaunga Lady Tūreiti Moxon has an urgent Waitangi Tribunal hearing set for this week which we fully support. I hope it's not too late."

Ngāti Kahungunu is the third largest iwi by population and second largest by land and coastal area, covering from Wairoa to Wairarapa. "I would like to invite Minister Reti to Ngāti Kahungunu to better understand exactly what the plan is to improve Māori Health outcomes and the role iwi, hapū and whānau will play in its implementation."

ENDS.

For media enquiries contact Bayden Barber 021570011