

# KAWE KÖRERO

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## GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH MĀORI

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# GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH MĀORI

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The Ministry of Health’s mission is “leading and influencing the health and disability sector to improve, promote and protect health and wellbeing through skilled policy advice, regulation, funding management and monitoring”.

If the Ministry is to achieve this mission we must consult and include the views of Māori in our work and ensure that all our activities take account of Māori. This includes the policy we produce and the way in which advice and services are delivered.

As Ministry of Health staff, we play a major role in overseeing the health sector and ensuring that an equally effective health care service is provided for Māori and non-Māori.

These *Guidelines for Communicating with Māori* have been developed to assist staff in meeting their responsibilities and to ensure that the Ministry is able to provide the best possible policy advice on behalf of Māori.





## PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION WITH MĀORI

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In its *Responsiveness Plan 1994* the Ministry of Health expresses a vision about being a leader in the health sector in its responsiveness to Māori.

The *Responsiveness Plan* states:

*To be responsive to Māori requires measures that reach the structure, strategies, systems, management, staff and culture of the organisation in such a way that it will account for the needs and aspirations of Māori in all its activities, and in particular its core business.*

A necessary part of being responsive to Māori is communicating with Māori – knowing when to, knowing how to and knowing why it is necessary.

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

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Communication with Māori should follow some basic principles:

- That it involve the widest possible range of Māori representation appropriate to the issue. The question of **who** to consult is critical and depends largely on the specific issue. Te Kete Hauora can assist in advising who are the appropriate Iwi or organisations to approach.
- Māori must be advised from the outset of the Ministry's intention to undertake consultation so that the two parties have an agreed understanding of the expected outcome.
- Sufficient notice and comprehensive information must be provided to Māori to allow for informed input from Māori.
- Māori responses are fully considered and are given the opportunity to influence the development of policy.





## WHO TO COMMUNICATE WITH

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Government departments often find communication with Māori difficult because they don't know who to contact and they don't know who to listen to. It is important that Māori nominate their own leaders or spokespeople rather than the Ministry deciding who it considers to be Māori representatives. There are a number of Māori groups that could be contacted.

### REGIONAL ISSUES

If the issue in question is an Iwi or Hapū project, then the Ministry will need to contact the appropriate people at a tribal or local level.

### NATIONAL ISSUES

If the issue in question has national implications it may be appropriate to communicate with:

- the Māori Congress
- the New Zealand Māori Council
- the Māori Women's Welfare League.

The latter two are established under statute and can provide a useful perspective. Often however it will still be necessary to consult at tribal level for national issues.

There are also sector and issue-driven groups with whom it will sometimes be appropriate to communicate. These include many Māori health groups like Te Hotu Manawa Māori and Ngā Pūmanawa Hauora, as well as general groups like the Māori Legal Service.

It is not sufficient to merely accept the advice of a single staff member or consultant employed to consult with Māori, or the advice of a single Māori person. It is inappropriate to consult solely with Māori units in other government departments. They are government departments themselves, and although they may have good access to Māori views for their own analysis, it is not their role to be providers of Māori opinion.

At all levels staff should be responsible for developing their own networks with Māori who have expertise with similar work, eg, water quality, mental health, disability support services, food quality.





## ADVICE ON WHO TO CONTACT

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In the Ministry, Te Kete Hauora can provide advice on the process of communicating with Māori. Te Puni Kōkiri can also assist by advising on appropriate contacts and on the most appropriate process.

## COMMUNICATION PROCESSES

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There are three processes that may be suitable for communicating with Māori. There may be elements of some or all of these in each communication with Māori groups.

### COLLECTING OPINION

This entails creating an opportunity to meet with a group of Māori, large or small, and listening to their opinions on a particular topic.

### INFORMING


This involves creating an opportunity to meet with a group of Māori, large or small, to inform them about a health policy or service. Written or electronic material can be used to support such meetings.

### CONSULTING

In order to communicate effectively with Māori it is important to consult with them. The essential elements of genuine consultation are ensuring:

- sufficient information is provided to the consulted party, so that they can make intelligent and informed decisions
- sufficient time for both the participation of the consulted party and the consideration of the advice given



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- genuine consideration of that advice, including an open mind and a willingness to change.

The Court of Appeal said about consultation in the case *Wellington International Airport v Air New Zealand* (1993) that:

*"If the party having the power to make a decision after consultation holds meetings with the parties it is required to consult, provides those parties with relevant information as they request, enters the meetings with an open mind, takes due notice of what is said, and waits until they have had their say before making a decision, then the decision is properly described as having been made after consultation. It is immaterial that those parties may have had other concerns which for their own reason they chose not to put forward."*

## PROCEDURE

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The style of communication that is most appropriate is dependent on the nature of the policy or service being discussed and the communication process that is adopted. The procedure for communicating with Māori may follow any of the following forms.

### *Wānanga:*

Māori representatives are invited to a hui for a major seminar and discussion. These hui can take up to three days and require information to be disseminated to participants at least two weeks beforehand so that people are informed of the issues and are focused on the objectives of the hui. The programme should be structured to provide plenty of time for the exchange of information amongst the participants.

### *Regional hui:*

Māori groups are asked to meet together at a regional hui. The regions may follow regional health authority boundaries, or be based on the Crown health enterprises areas, or they may be based on Iwi regions, depending on the topic to be discussed and the purpose of the hui. Involvement of the Tāngata Whenua (original inhabitants of the land) at these hui is crucial. It is also important to ask the Tāngata Whenua first whether it is appropriate to hold the hui in their area.





*Local hui:*

A large number of local hui can be organised by contacting all Māori authorities, urban and rural. This results in communication with a much larger group. It is better to work with Māori health providers at this local level as well as Tāngata Whenua.

*Roundtable:*

Selected representatives are invited to participate in a preliminary discussion of the issues.

*Māori consultants:*

Consultants can be used to gather information, make contact with the appropriate networks or assist with the organisation of hui.

*Media:*

Information can be disseminated through the network of Māori media, either radio stations or newspapers.

*Letter writing:*

Material can be sent to specific organisations for comment in a specified timeframe. This is the least effective method of communicating with Māori, if not used in conjunction with personal contact to explain the importance of the issue.

## QUALITY COMMUNICATION

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If the communication process is to provide quality information then consideration must be given to the ways in which the process is conducted.

### RESOURCING

Māori leaders and groups are regularly consulted on a variety of topics by numerous agencies. Thought should be given to resourcing the particular communication process. It may be appropriate to pay travel and accommodation expenses for participants or to cover some of the other expenses incurred. These costs will need to be included in the project.


### PREPARATION

Before the communication process begins, staff should identify the ways in which they think a particular policy may be relevant to Māori.

If communication is to be honest and genuine, Māori must be given time to absorb any information. Ministry staff should not arrive at a meeting or hui, present Māori with information and expect them to respond on the spot. Many individuals may need to take information back to their respective Iwi for further consultation or comment.

Adequate time is required to consider issues, particularly issues of major significance that will warrant in-depth analysis and further discussion.





If written material is to communicate effectively it should comply with routine quality standards, contain no jargon and be appropriate to a Māori audience. Consider presenting information graphically, particularly summarising the key points and using overhead transparencies, flowcharts and videos.

## **TIME**

Time for discussion and debate by Māori depends on the complexity of the topic and impact of the policy. This may involve a number of smaller hui being held.

Māori generally prefer kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) communication and to hear an explanation of an issue by a person with some knowledge of the topic. This also gives them the opportunity to consider the wisdom, sincerity and motives of the presenters.

## **GENUINE COMMUNICATION**

The communication process must give Māori the opportunity for effective input. Otherwise they are unlikely to believe that their views are being genuinely sought.

If Māori are presented with a proposal which has been developed without their input then the proposal is likely to meet resistance.

Ongoing relationships with Māori must be established to ensure a relationship of trust and respect. This may involve keeping Māori informed of Ministry developments and responsibilities. It will also involve providing feedback on the ways in which views of Māori have been utilised.

## TRANSPARENCY

All the above factors contribute to making the communication process transparent. This is crucial if Māori are to be equally involved in the decision, and therefore bound by any decision.

The framework for communication should be set out clearly to avoid any misunderstanding of the process. The Ministry should be clear about the reason behind the consultation and the potential for the ideas to be part of the final policy.

To complete the cycle of communication it is important to provide some feedback to Māori on how the information collected was used. This can be by way of:

- draft policy papers
- newsletters
- letters
- meetings.

If you are not able to provide feedback to people who have been consulted with, it is important to tell them this from the outset of the exercise.

If Māori views are not to be incorporated, the Ministry should notify those consulted and if possible outline the reasons for their exclusion. This action signals not only courtesy and respect but also that the communication process was genuine.





## KNOWING WHEN TO ASK MĀORI

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Māori are often swamped with requests for consultation, advice, and knowledge in tikanga from government agencies.

Staff should give thought to whether consultation is appropriate. Consultation with Māori should not become a substitute for using available resource material. There are some matters where it is appropriate to ask Māori advisers within the Ministry whose jobs are to provide assistance, and agencies outside the Ministry, for example the Māori Language Commission and Te Puni Kōkiri.

## APPROPRIATE MINISTRY REPRESENTATIVES

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The Ministry needs to put some thought into who to send to the different hui. Māori are likely to be represented by kaumātua or people of high status and the absence of people of equal stature and mandate on behalf of the Ministry will be insulting.

It is essential that Ministry staff are confident that they have fully understood the nuances and tensions of the discussion. Language and cultural differences should be catered for through the presence of an interpreter or a community's or organisation's liaison officer. (For example, polytechnics have Māori liaison officers who work closely with Māori communities in their area.)





## CONCLUSION

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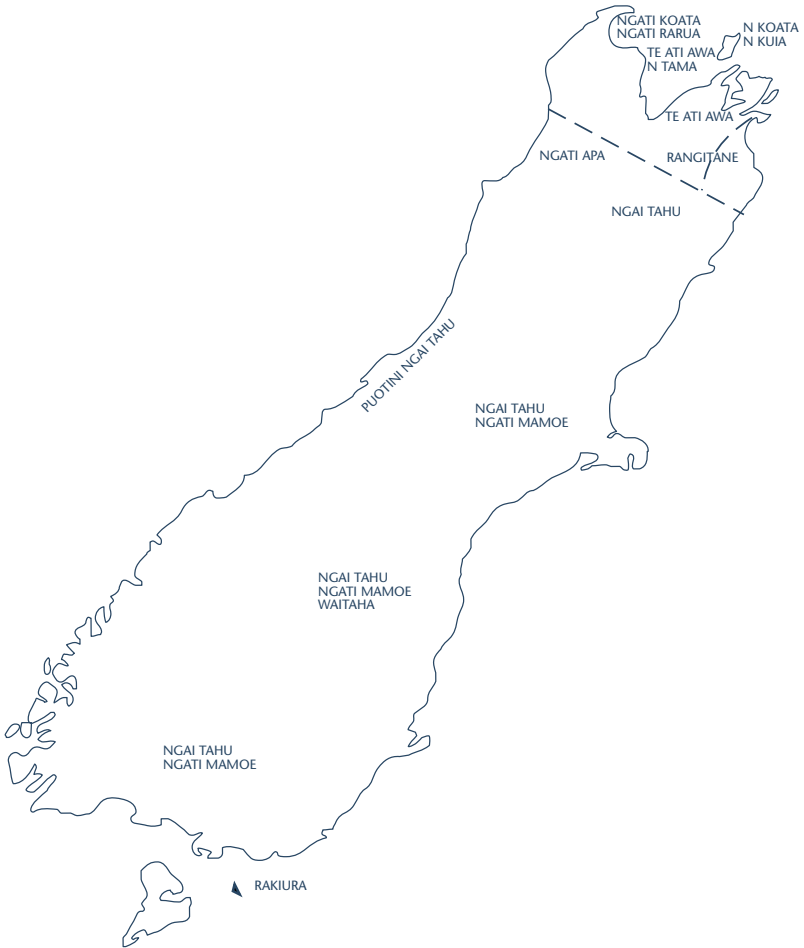
Communication with Māori can assist the Ministry develop policies and services which are responsive to Māori. However, this can only be assured if staff follow these guidelines, ask for assistance when they think they need it and listen carefully to the responses of Māori.

# IWI - TE IKA A MAUI (NORTH ISLAND)



# IWI - TE WAI POUNAMU (SOUTH ISLAND)

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## CHATHAM ISLANDS

NGATI MUTUNGA

NGATI TAMA

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