



## Te Ahu a Turanga: Manawatū Tararua Highway Alliance

MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AWARD  
SMALL-MEDIUM ORGANISATION WINNER

WATCH  
VIDEO



When a massive slip in the Manawatū gorge left the road impassable in April 2017, the impact on local communities and the wider region was huge and a new route was urgently needed.

Shortly after the slip, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency worked with iwi to trial a new approach to genuine Crown-Iwi partnerships.

The new highway route traverses the Ruahine Ranges and a culturally significant landscape including Te Āpiti (Manawatū Gorge) and the Manawatū River and its tributaries; Parahaki Island (Māori freehold Land, represented by Te Āpiti Ahu Whenua Trust); Te Ahu a Turanga (the resting place of Turanga-i-Mua), and the Te Ahu a Turanga track, an important historic route between the east and west.

Regional Manager Infrastructure Delivery, Central North Island (Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency) Lonnie Dalzell says five iwi have a connection to the project area, and while there was a long history of inter-iwi connection, they had not sat around the table together before.

“In an historic first for Aotearoa, iwi are partners in the Te Ahu a Turanga Alliance, which comprises Rangitāne o Manawatū, Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-a-Rua, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki nui-a-Rua, Te Runanga o Raukawa (Ngāti Raukawa and Nga Kaitiaki o Ngāti Kauwhata) along with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, HEB Construction, Fulton Hogan, Aurecon and WSP,” he says.

“The partnership is more than a single initiative; the partnership is the heart of the project. Without it, the highway wouldn’t be happening.”

The Alliance's approach to partnership and co-design holds people and culture in the centre, within the wider environmental context.

The workforce is projected to grow significantly with up to 350 people employed at any one time. An estimated 5000 will have worked on the project by completion.

The Alliance has committed to making sure that every single person – along with their whānau – who works on the project has a sense of belonging, and the opportunity to be part of its holistic approach to health and wellbeing. A commitment to te ao Māori is at the heart of all decisions.

Alliance Project Director Tony Adams says, “Working together to develop a project whānau has provided the opportunity to honestly explore what partnership means for us, and enabled us to forge an Alliance culture where the word partnership is no longer needed; we are a unified team. This approach has deeply integrated te ao Māori into the design development and construction methodologies in a way that appropriately celebrates this area and its rich cultural heritage.”

**“The partnership is more than a single initiative; the partnership is the heart of the project. Without it, the highway wouldn't be happening”**



## THE AIM

A \$620 million roading project in a culturally significant landscape required partnership between iwi, Crown and contractors to not only connect regions, but to honour sacred spaces and nurture communities.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, iwi and private organisations committed to working together to create the new highway.
- The project is based on the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Te Pūtahi, the iwi and Māori Outcomes Directorate for Te Ahu a Turanga, was established as a centralised portfolio of iwi and Māori-focused roles dedicated to leading the delivery of outcomes in key areas such as employment and procurement, education and training, resource development, planning, design and cultural outcomes, and delivering te reo and tikanga initiatives.
- Te ao Māori is integrated into the project in every way from the physical design of the highway, to the way decisions are made and the culture that carries through to the day-to-day life on the project.
- An app based on Professor Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model of health and wellbeing invites employees to reflect on how they are doing and to be connected to a range of support services if needed.
- While ultimate accountability sits with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, who is accountable for the success of the partnership and the project, all involved in the Alliance have a deep sense of responsibility that ensures sustainability and success.

## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- The Alliance's commitment to honouring Te Tiriti is behind its intentions to, wherever possible, employ 60 per cent locals and 30 per cent Māori and Pacifica people on the project. As at April 2021, 21 per cent of Alliance whānau are Māori.
- The partnership approach has created a healthy and diverse team:
  - 35 - to 40% of the workforce is female, with 25% of those in construction roles and 43% in engineering-related roles in the structures team.
  - The project has people from the UK, France, South Africa and Fiji on the team
  - Through the Te Whare Tapa Whā app, 73 people have been followed up with proactive wellbeing interventions.
- The project's application for consent was concluded in the Environment Court, unopposed, in a single day. This represents a major change to way infrastructure projects will happen in the future.

## KEY LEARNING

The project's commitment to te ao Māori and iwi partnership challenges many cultural norms in the construction sector and potentially opens the sector up to a more diverse and well workforce.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

Visit [diversityworks.nz](https://diversityworks.nz) or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)