

Hon Parekura Horomia

23/03/2007

Ngā Aho Whakaari 2007 National Conference

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you today.
National identity is a key goal of this government. We can all take pride in our country's unique national identity. Each of us contributes to it and therefore we are each a part of it.

When we celebrate our national identity, we simply cannot bypass the fact that Māori people provide the "X"-factor that makes us unique in the world.

This year, I noticed a definite shift in the significance of Waitangi to all New Zealanders.

The 6th February is the day we annually focus our collective attention on our history, our present and our future together. Last month, I was very heartened by the range of celebrations that took place throughout the length and breadth of our beautiful country.

However, this year, more than any other, I realised how Waitangi has come to symbolise our willingness to express ourselves from our distinctive world view under the unifying banner of Waitangi.

This is surely the sign of a maturing nation.

As active participants in the creative industries, each of you makes a special contribution towards our national identity – you allow us to see ourselves for who we are and to let others learn about who we are too.

This Government has involved itself significantly in the arts because we know that our sense of identity and nationhood depends to a significant extent on actively supporting New Zealand's arts, culture and heritage.

Confidence in that culture, an appreciation of its unique aspects, and a strong sense of cultural identity contribute positively to economic growth, social cohesion, the acceptance and encouragement of diversity, and creative thinking in a range of fields.

That's one of the reasons why, through Te Puni Kōkiri, we were willing to support your hui this year.

This Government is also very supportive of Māori broadcasting because it reflects our commitment to te reo Māori and tikanga. Broadcasting the Māori language contributes to the cultural distinctiveness and mātāuranga of Māori people.

I know that as a group you were interested to learn about recent developments in Māori broadcasting policy.

This is very much a work in progress but I can share with you that Te Puni Kōkiri is currently reviewing the policy settings for Māori broadcasting, with a view to ensuring that Māori broadcasting policy contributes to a thriving and sustainable Māori broadcasting industry.

This work will be a priority for my officials over this year.
Already, Te Puni Kōkiri has begun general discussions with:
· Te Whakaruruhau o ngā Reo Irirangi Māori;

- Te Māngai Pāho;
- Te Taura Whiri I te Reo Māori;
- the Māori Television Service; and
- your own executive committee.

Within the work that Te Puni Kōkiri is involved in they are investigating ways that Government can work with the industry to further develop the creative industry; including how Māori broadcasting policy can support individual and company development.

Supporting Māori to develop sustainable business growth in their communities through broadcasting will ensure that this resource is available for future generations. It will also build a new skill set within those communities.

Te Puni Kōkiri is also considering how links between Māori broadcasting and public broadcasting can be strengthened and the roles of all the players into the future.

I understand that the feedback from those general discussions has been very positive especially for the chance to input at such an early stage of policy development.

I have asked Te Puni Kōkiri to complete the conceptual work for expanding the policy settings for Māori broadcasting by September 2007.

Before I end I just want to make a brief mention of the Māori Potential Approach which is an approach to Māori development that seeks to affirm the capability, initiative and aspiration of Māori to make choices for themselves.

All of Te Puni Kōkiri's work including the Māori broadcasting work supports the Māori Potential principles.

Put simply, this approach is about Māori succeeding as Māori and ultimately about achieving a better quality of life for all Māori.

Now, more than at any time in our history as a nation, Māori potential has never been greater as eminent Māori academic Mason Durie recognised at the Hui Taumata 2005.

For too long, Māori people and issues were trapped within a discourse that constrained what we and others considered possible for our future.

The promise of what was possible became the problems that had to be addressed and consequently no one (Māori included) was able to see the potential for our future development.

In central government, where I have spent so much of my recent working life, both as a public servant and now politician, policy-speak in terms of Māori policy was dominated by staggeringly negative indicators across the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual spectra.

What was disturbing about past Māori policy was the consequence of increased dependency.

Whether deliberate or not, Māori became trapped in a downward spiral of dependency and like a dog chasing its tail, Māori policy went round and round in circles since so much of it was informed by negative indicators that just kept getting worse.

But too often, the positive gains made by Māori were ignored.

Our population is growing, it's youthful, more of us are working, fewer of us are receiving lower incomes, more of us are participating in tertiary education, our reo is beginning to thrive, and through an increasing number of Treaty settlements and flourishing assets base the Māori economy is growing positively.

So these are very exciting times for Māori potential and we should all be seizing the opportunities to realise our potential because the Māori Potential Approach is not about deficit.

Rather it is based on our strengths and aspirations.

I hope you've had a good hui.

Your mahi is important to us all because whether you are in front of the cameras or behind them, whether you are about to enter the industry or are working in it now, your contribution to how we see ourselves helps to define who we are but is also vital for our collective well-being. Kia ora.