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Water Management and the Mauri Model Decision Making Framework

Recent settlements for Treaty claims require inclusion of Māori input on water management, typically through mechanisms of Joint Management. Frameworks that facilitate joint management have not been developed specifically for Aotearoa. These frameworks struggle with the dichotomy of wai, that is the tensions that exist between the conceptualisation of water as a taonga on one hand and as a property right on the other.

Hapū and Iwi have direct relationships to their water bodies that are reinforced in pepeha and whakatauki. Water bodies are key elements in identity, whakapapa and mana. Water has its own mauri, which is important to protect from denigration. Therefore Māori involvement in management incorporates the conceptualisation of water as a taonga and seek to maintain or enhance its mauri. Conversely Western society relates primarily to water in terms of its economic value. Relationships are created through granting of property right that enables exploitation of characteristics of the water body for economic gain. The contemporary management of water in Aotearoa is based on this approach, and joint management assumes this can include Māori concepts.

Mauri is the central concept that the Mauri Model Decision Making Framework uses to empower Hapū and Iwi priorities within the joint management process. The Mauri Model is aligned to New Zealand legislation and enables the integration of disparate conceptualisations of water referred to. The aim of this paper is to introduce a decision making framework that empowers the hapū and iwi perspectives of sustainable water management within the joint management process.

Dr Te Kipa Kepa Brian Morgan is a Chartered Professional Engineer and has strived to identify sustainable engineering solutions for papakainga and other Māori development during his career. This goal led Kepa to join the University of Auckland in 2000, where he now holds the dual responsibilities of Senior Lecturer in the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, and Associate Dean Māori for the Faculty of Engineering. In these roles Kepa has increased the participation rates of Māori and Pasifika staff and students, while his research has focused on the creation of an integrated decision making framework for sustainability, and the development of a new structural building material, UKU, fibre reinforced earth composite. During this time Kepa has held various governance positions including Director of the State Owned Enterprise Meridian Energy Limited (2002 – 2006) and inaugural president of SPPEEx 2003 - 2006. During his career Kepa has been recognised with the inaugural Housing Industry Association award for special contribution to Housing (1993), a University of Auckland Cultural Blue for kapahaka in 2002, the Australasian Association of Engineering Educators Excellence in Inclusivity Award in 2005, and opportunities to deliver invited keynote presentations at international engineering conferences in Aotearoa, Australia and the United States.