



NGĀTI WHĀTUA ŌRĀKEI

03 March, 2021

Media Statement

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei statement regarding Erebus memorial project

On 29 November 1979, 257 passenger and crew of Air New Zealand flight 901 tragically lost their lives when their plane crashed into Mt Erebus, Antarctica. Aotearoa's worst peacetime disaster. For over 40 years the whānau and friends of those lost have been left without a place for remembrance or to reflect on the enormous impact of so many lives lost and changed forever.

Since 2018 Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei have been engaged in relation to the progress of the Erebus Memorial project which is intended to correct this long-standing injustice. In November 2018, we wrote to Manatū Taonga, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, to express our support for the project and also for the use of the proposed site which is in the heart of the Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei rohe. We see this as a natural continuation of the manaakitanga that we have extended to our manuhiri since the foundation of Auckland in 1840.

We have attended meetings held with the Erebus whānau and heard the emotional and long-overdue apology from Air New Zealand. We heard directly from the families involved and those connected to the extremely difficult recovery effort and felt their anguish and the anger at the fact nothing had been done for over 40 years to acknowledge their loss.

In terms of the proposed memorial at Taurarua (Dove Myer Robinson Park), we have reviewed the archaeological assessments and expert aborculture reports. The tupuna Pohutukawa will not be destroyed or affected – this will be retained and protected. We made sure that the location of the memorial would not damage the environment or be culturally inappropriate. As mana whenua we will ensure that the works are completed sensitively and are culturally sound. There will be further cultural narrative added to the site to ensure all whānau and visitors to the site understand the centuries of connection Māori and particularly, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, have to this whenua.

Unfortunately, there have been some recent public claims that there will be greater impact on the site and to the Pohutukawa tree than was shared with us through the consultation process. As a result we asked for clarification from Manatū Taonga in relation to these claims. This has been provided. We have also asked for those making the claims to provide their evidence. This has not been provided. As a result, we remain completely in support of this very worthy and long overdue memorial.

What is sadly lost in all of this, are the families of those tragically lost in the Erebus disaster. Since day one we have been supportive of their journey to have a place to reflect and remember. We as tangata whenua understand very deeply the need to be able to grieve and acknowledge respectfully those we have lost. We understand completely the importance of having a place of mana to be able to visit and remember our loved ones. As the Erebus whānau have chosen a site in our rohe, we will respect their wishes and ensure this is done in a culturally and environmentally safe way. As mana



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whenua of Central Auckland, this is our role to play and we take this seriously. We do this every day on many projects across Tāmaki.

It has been clear to us that there is a campaign being run by a small number to stop the memorial. We have tried to avoid engaging in activities that are part of what seems to be a public relations campaign to stop the project. This statement is to clarify our position, to show our continued support, and will be our final public statement on the opposition to this kaupapa.

Finally, to correct the course of this kōrero, we offer our manaaki. We encourage Manatū Taonga, those in opposition and any Erebus whānau who would like to meet at Ōrākei Marae to discuss and agree a way forward.

Nō reira, e ngā tini aitua, koutou kua ngaro ki tua o te ārai, haere koutou

Haere, haere, haere atu rā

Marama Royal

Chair, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust