## Children, Young Persons, and their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Bill

# Submission by Public Issues, Methodist Church, Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa

Prepared by Betsan Martin, 3 March 2017.

Preparation for this submission involved contributions and Te Taha Māori of the Methodist Church and extensive consultation with organizations involved with the wellbeing of families, whānau, fanau and children.

Here we identify selected components of the bill for comment with recommendations.

## Context of the bill

We appreciate that the bill is designed to support the new operating model for the Ministry for Vulnerable Children. That being would prefer to see a Ministry for Child Wellbeing which encompasses all children, and have concerns about a deficit orientation of the terminology of vulnerability.

The carving out of 'Vulnerable Children' is a way of narrowing responsibility for children, an expression of a targeted approach, and restricting the allocation of resources to the most at risk group. While this has an economic rationality, it leaves exposed children in marginal circumstances. Evidence on the links between poverty and risk of abuse, such as provided in the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) submission to this bill, suggest that policy to reduce poverty, to build capability for Māori and for Māori led strategies are most likely to address Māori/non-Māori discrepancies across all sectors.

Our analysis therefore encompasses a wider public good approach to children. It brings an historical perspective informed by reference to Puao Te-Ata-Tu, the 1988 Report on the Department of Social Welfare. The enlightened recommendations within this report led to the 1989 Children Young Persons and Their Families act.

#### Introduction

Overall we consider the bill to be a retrograde step from the significant achievements of the 1989 Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, in particular with regard to provisions and requirements for Māori self-determination in respect of the implementation of services for Māori.

We share the widespread view that this bill undermines the focus on the right and responsibility of whānau to determine appropriate care for Māori children in need of care and protection.

Whānau ora represents a positive example of Māori designed and led services to whānau with implementation at local levels. The Care and Protection system should facilitate and require whānau engagement, as envisaged by the innovation of the Family Group Conference.

We appreciate that CYF Care and Protection is for Māori and non-Māori children and families alike and that there are beneficial aspects of the bill.

Beneficial provisions of the bill include the extension of support for young people in care up to the age of 21, with the possibility of assistance up to age 25. We support the extension of the youth justice jurisdiction to include 17 year olds. The payment for caregivers is a welcome and beneficial provision of the bill.

At the same time, considering the significance of the disproportionate weight of Māori children in need of Care and Protection, and that the legislation overtly addresses this, we bring attention this dimension of the bill.

Hui Poari, the Māori Council of the Methodist church, identified that there are not enough social workers to cover the Māori case loads. Hui Poari highlights the importance of resourcing the training of Māori social workers. Provision for capability building for Māori to manage CYF programmes for Māori children and whānau was a feature of the 1989 CYPF legislation.

The 1989 legislation was a response to Puao te Ata-Tu which identified institutional racism in the delivery of services for children at risk and in state care. We are also mindful of the backdrop of the Final Report of the Confidential Listening and Assistance Service 2015 "Some Memories Never Fade."

Overall our analysis is that this legislation undermines the principle of placing Māori children with whānau or kin with whakapapa connections. The statements of intention to achieve this are undermined by provisional clauses so that the obligation to achieve this is removed.

We will track through some of the ways the legislation weakens requirements for kin placements which were so hard won in 1989 after Puao Te-Ata-Tu.

We are mindful that there are 5300 children in State Care of which 3,200 are Maori. Therefore we scrutinize the bill to identify:

- a. Whether substantive improvement will be achieved by this bill in terms of reducing the numbers of vulnerable children
- b. Whether the disproportion of Māori children in need of care and protection will be overcome
- c. The provision of resources to reduce risk, and in particular to reduce risk for whānau and Māori children
- d. Resourcing of Māori social workers or other professionals required for the implementation of CYF services for Māori
- e. The conditions will ensure the nurture and development of children for participation and beneficial contributions to family, society and the world

## **Substantive Issues**

Core issues for Māori are for proper consultation with Māori, for Māori children in need of care and protection to be placed with whanu, hapū, Iwi or families with whakapapa connections.

Furthermore services to Māori to be delivered by Māori, require the ongoing resourcing of training and professional development to ensure a workforce appropriate to the services required.

Overall there is a widening of discretionary provisions in the bill.

## Consultation

There is widespread reporting on failure to engage with Māori for the preparation of this bill. This was noted in the Regulatory Impact statement and subsequently by the New Zealand Māori Council and Iwi Leaders and Dame Tariana Turia have verified the lack of consultation. The failure of engagement and partnership with Maori has been evident in the membership of the Expert Panel on Modernising Child Youth and Family, and on development of the new operating model and the bill.

We refer to the article by Dr Ian Hyslop as further evidence of the lack of consultation with Maori, and with the wider public in development of the legislation. (Herald, Wednesday October 12th, 2016)

## Placement with kin and early intervention

A key reference for this concern is in the Cabinet Papers prior to the 2016 bill, which set out a rationale for the revision of care principles toward a more 'child-centred' approach by 'increasing the ability for non-kin placement where it is in the child's best interests' (Maori Women's Welfare League)

The weakening of requirements for kin placements may not be immediately apparent in the text of the 2016 bill. They are most evident in the discretionary clauses on the placement of Māori children with whānau, hapū, iwi or those with whakapapa connections. The clause reads:

## 1. Discretionary Placements:

Part 1, Clause 8(b) iii. 'whenever possible, the relationship between the child or young person and their family, whānau, and usual caregiver is respected, supported, and strengthened:'

S. 13 c where a child or young person is at risk of being removed from their immediate family, whānau, or usual caregivers, the child's or young person's usual caregivers, family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group should, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable in the circumstances, be assisted to enable them to provide a safe, stable, and loving home to the child or young person in accordance with whakapapa and whānaungatanga:

## 2. Early intervention:

The provisions for early intervention open the door to the early removal of children at risk and foreclose on strenuous efforts to provide intensive support for children to stay with their own parents safely. Examples of provisions for early intervention:

'By requiring early consideration and planning for the possibility that alternative care arrangements may be needed for a child, the revised principles aim to reduce the instability and disruption a child or young person can experience when a decision is made to remove them from their home' (Explanatory notes p. 5)

Part 1. Clause 7c. 'ensuring that children and young persons who come to the attention of the department have a safe, stable, and loving home from the earliest opportunity:'

Section 13. intervention should occur early to improve the safety and well-being of children, young persons, and their families and to address risk of future harm (including the risk that a child or young person may offend or re-offend, or not achieve their developmental potential):

Although these could be beneficial and preventative provisions, they open the door to early removal of children.

The emphasis on early intervention may be read as pro-active provisions for the safety and stability of a child. Early intervention is emphasized in Sections such as 'preparation for living independently to begin early' and provision for an 'early intervention response and help ensure safe, stable, and loving care for children...' (S.13.(2) (a).

Early intervention can be a double –edged sword. It allows for pro-active safety measures and It can remove the spur to act exhaustively to bring in resources families and whānau to support them to achieve stability, safety and security. This is taxing work. Resourcing families and whānau is provided for in the bill under the Purposes through 'promoting 'capability at the whānau level to improve life course outcomes for Māori children, young persons and their whānau' and amplified in the explanatory notes.

Practitioners and analysts also read this to mean that it will be more easy to plan for the placement of a baby before birth, where circumstances indicate the child will be at risk. We need to read these subltle changes through the lens of inordinate removals of Maori children historically and currently and the propensity for these to rise.

We support the recognition of siblings in the new definition of "young persons" and for the relationship with siblings to be supported, strengthened. We would support placing siblings together or at the least for contact to be maintained.

## Recommendation

- a. Remove the provional phrase 'whenever possible' in Section 5. If there is to be any discretion regarding non-kin placements these should be defined by Māori.
- b. That a clause be inserted that ensures an exhaustive search for kin placement whānau
- c. That requirements be added for proactive measures for capability building for Māori social workers and other professionals to ensure that CYF services for Māori can be carried out by Māori. These provisions need to be inserted into legislation so that rehabilitation, recovery and resilience of children are fostered.

## Child Centred approach

The 2016 bill claims to introduce a new child-centred approach as a key platform of the new Ministry for Vulnerable Children and as a centre-piece of the Oranga Tamariki bill. This may seem to be a corrective measure. However we refer to the 1989 Act: Section 6. which places the welfare and interests of child or young person as paramount:

Welfare and interests of child or young person paramount

In all matters relating to the administration or application of this Act, .....the welfare and interests of the child or young person shall be the first and paramount consideration, having regard to the principles set out in <u>sections 5</u> and <u>13</u>.(1989)

It is difficult to see why child centred provisions are an improvement on the paramount interest of the child.

While placing the child at the centre appears to be a credible focus, it can also weaken of the role of the Family Group Conference. The child-centred focus places the emphasis away from whānau priorities as a central principle for Maori – an indigenous principle which has been well documented and accepted (See Appendix and reference to the UNCROC Fifth Periodic Review).

The link between the persistent profile of Maori socio-economic disadvantage and the disruption of traditional cultural frameworks for social integration and systems for management of anti-social behaviour are made clear in Puao Te Ata-Tu

The evidence seems overwhelming that the Maori underperformace in social and economic status and law observance is symptomatic of alienation and monoculturalism leading to the disintegration of traditional sanctions (S. 2., 25, 129).

The foundational 1989 legislation was set up to take account of the child in the context of whānau and family group.

## **Recommendation**

a. Reword the child centred provisions to read 'child centred in the context of whānau and kin and family relationships' (with regards to whānau and kin, wording to be proposed by Māori advisors)

## **Family Group Conference**

This includes the Family Group Conference. Previously a Family Group Conference was a requirement where a social worker believed a child to be in need of care and protection.

The 1989 provision ensures a family group conference is convened at an early stage.

Where any social worker or constable believes, after inquiry, that any child or young person is in need of care or protection .... that social worker or constable shall forthwith report the matter to a care and protection co-ordinator, who shall convene a family group conference

Now, although a Family Group Conference is required before a Care and Protection Order is made, a Family Group Conference is not now required (by the bill) upon the child coming to the attention of care and protection social workers.

The scope of availability of a Family Group Conference is widened though new powers of the Minister to call for a family group conference where a child is considered to be at risk and therefore could be beneficial for putting in place care plans for a child where there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

While the extended powers of the Minister to convene a Conference are commendable, there seems to be less requirement on social workers to do so. The Family Group Conference provides an opportunity to identify the needs within whānau and to mobilize the resources to build capability of whānau to care for children.

#### **Recommendation**

- a. That the requirement to convene a family Group Conference when child is brought to the attention of a social worker or the police be reinstated.
- b. That resourcing for Family Group Conferences be commensurate with these requirements.

## Implementation of the legislation, Financial Support for Caregivers, Resourcing Whānau and Families

The provision of financial support for caregivers is welcome. The introduction of National Care Standards for caregivers is an important to enhancing care and protection.

The aim of these standards 'to ensure children and young persons in care and in youth justice residences are cared for in a way that improves their outcomes and meets their needs, expectations, and fundamental rights' need to correspond to the measures put in place for monitoring and publicising outcomes.

The ongoing profile of disproportionate risk for Māori tamariki needs to be considered with a system-wide analysis and approach, rather than by an assumption that the 1989 legislation has failed.

A simple analysis of discrepancies between Māori and non-Māori on several indicators of infant mortality, education, employment shows a persisting profile of discrepancy (see Appendix) Failure to improve outcomes for Māori is more likely to be attributed to inadequate policy to address wider issues of poverty, health and educational achievement as well as the failure of adequate resourcing for the proper implementation of the 1989 legislation.

We refer to the pertinent clauses in the 1989 legislation in which socio-economic issues were up-front, with direction to address these proactively. For example:

Our commitment is to the attainment of socio-economic parity between Maori and non-Maori by the provision of resources to meet Maori needs on Maori terms. The Maori Economic Development Commission has also recognised that negative funding, or funding that compounds negative outcomes for Maori peopledependency, unemployment, institutionalisation etc-should be redeployed.(S 139)

Attention to socio-economic issues is absent from the 2016 bill yet this is of ongoing importance.

The profile of Māori in terms of all the social and economic indices – on education, health, unemployment, criminal justice and poverty, is one of discrepancy, disadvantage and risk (See Appendix). Placement with whānau means calling on families and elders who may not be resourced to support an additional child in need of care and protection.

Research on family violence and on poverty includes evidence of grandparents who take a child into their care with no additional financial or other support, and have to provide from their National Super.

While there are many provisions which appear to retain and protect cultural connection for children in need care and protection through whānau placements we see that the

discretionary clauses have the potential to undermine and evade the responsibility to go to the lengths necessary to achieve culturally aligned placements.

The placement of Māori children with whānau or kin needs to be achieved by enabling provisions for wider whānau which include economic support. Payment for careOgivers will go part of the way to enable whaānau placements.

## **Recommendations**

- a. That recruitment for caregivers and the development of care standards go hand in hand with proactive strategies for Māori engagement in setting those standards.
- b. That there is equitable financial support to Māori caregivers; that is, active strategies to recruit Māori caregivers.

## **Treaty of Waitangi**

'Practical commitment' to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are expressed as whānaungatanga, whakapapa, etc. While these are relevant to tikanga Maori frameworks and refer to cultural connection and the world view of Te Ao Māori, they are not placed in the context of an underlying principle of rangatiratanga, or Maori authority over things Maori .

## **Best Interests of the Child**

We note the paramount consideration of Best Interests of the Child. Section 4A.

In all matters relating to the administration or application of this Act (other than Parts 4 and 5 and sections 351 to 360), the well-being and best interests of the child or young person are the first and paramount consideration, having regard to the principles set out in sections 5, 5A, and 13.

We refer to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 'General Comment No. 12 on the right of the child to have his/her best interests taken as a primary consideration'. This is a document rich in guidance. The General Comment sets out principles for as ensuring the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognized in the Convention and the holistic development of the child.

## State Responsibility for Best Interests of the Child

We wish to emphasis a responsibility framework and draw attention to the three primary obligations of State parties in the 'General Comment':

- (a) The obligation to ensure that the <u>child's best interests are appropriately</u> <u>integrated and consistently applied</u> in every action taken by a public institution, especially in all implementation measures, administrative and judicial proceedings which directly or indirectly impact on children;
- (b) The obligation to ensure that <u>all judicial and administrative decisions</u> as well as policies and legislation concerning children demonstrate that the child's best interests have been a primary consideration. This includes describing how the best interests have been examined and assessed, and what weight has been ascribed to them in the decision.

(c) The obligation to ensure that the interests of the child have been <u>assessed and taken as a primary consideration in decisions and actions taken by the private sector,</u> including those providing services, or any other private entity or institution making decisions that concern or impact on a child.

This General comment recommends reviewing and amending domestic legislation and other sources of law so as to incorporate article 3, of the UN Convention and that it is reflected and implemented in all national laws. Article 3 gives primary consideration to the requirement to assess and implement the child's best interests.

The inclusion of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children** is supported.

Comments on the UN Convention mostly pertain to the General Comment No. 14. Above.

## **Recommendation**

a. In particular we urge refreshed attention to obligations to safeguard Māori and indigenous interests, and articulation of values and wellbeing concerning children (see UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) 'A child's 'best interests has great propensity to be interpreted through the lens of western individualized notions of care. Whānaungatanga responsibilities are collectively oriented and may take precedence over self interest, regardless of the resource capacity of the whānau.

## **Measureable Outcomes**

Within a framework of responsibility we include reference to the section of the bill on measurable outcomes, New Section 7, Clause 12.

There is benefit in the requirement to put in place measurable outcomes for Māori children, with regard to the following:

7a. the policies and practices of the department that impact on the well-being of children have the objective of reducing disparities by setting measurable outcomes for Māori children and young persons who come to the attention of the department:

b. policies, practices and services of the department must have regard to the mana and whakapapa of Māori children and young persons and the whānaungatanga responsibilities of their whānau, hapū, and iwi

## **Recommendations:**

Measurable outcomes should include the following: Hui Poari...?

- a. Affirmative education policies with corresponding measures of educational outcomes for Maori children
- b. Monitor enrolments, retention and success rates in te reo Maori learning, including in kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Maori, wananga
- c. Published rates of placement of Tamariki who have to be removed from their parent(s) with whānau, hapū, iwi or kin with whakapapa connection.

  This includes documenting the rates of placement with Māori and non-Māori families. Families. Currently of the 5300 children in the care of Child Youth and Family, 3,200 identify as Māori and 2,300 are in the care of whānau or kin.

- d. Transparency of procedures to seek and secure placement of Tamariki with whānau, hapū, iwi
- e. Documentation of support, remedial pathways and capability building opportunities that are offered and taken up by whānau and families with children in need of care and protection.
- f. A record of court proceedures for children and youth before the criminal justice system, to asses the extent to which rehabilitative and restorative justice objectives have been followed and achieved (See General Statement 1V. A. (b) 28.)
- g. Establishment of assessment criteria for a child's best interests which includes Māori defined criteria for Māori children and takes account of the best interests of Māori as a group (vis-à-vis the General Statement 1V A. 2. (c) 23. This is to view the child in the context of their collective interests, and specifically for Māori to recognize indigenous world views and collective cultural rights.

## **Information Sharing and Data collection**

Information sharing is clearly intended to enhance care and protection services through reference to a range of care services and across different sectors.

Information is also a matter of data collection. Information gathering is taking place in the context of new systems of data collection, social investment and predictive risk modeling.

This is not the place to elaborate very much on the risks that have been identified with the use of data for predictive risk modeling. The risk of the predictive data collection include higher requirements for background checks and care standards mean smaller pool of eligible whānau for placements, considering the higher rates of adverse social indicators. Questions to ask include:

- What time frame do these checks cover.
- Do they take account of rehabilitation?
- What supports can be provided to optimize successful rehabilitation.

The propensity for a profile of risk factors to be determinative and lock people into futures premised on past profiles is a major concern and needs far more investigation. We caution about the long shadow of offending and records of risk factors.

The NZCCSS submission refers to the 'clean slate policy' by which records of less serious offences are removed after 7 years.

Furthermore these models for data collection do not take account of positive interventions and the development of resilience within whånau, families and children.

We refer the Select Committee to research on methods of participatory data collection and modeling which allow for the positive effects of interventions to support and enable whānau and families to provide safe and stable homes for children

The tools of participatory data collection and modeling have been applied in environmental sectors, however they are applicable for social data. (Reference: M. van den Belt and A. Cole (2014) Ecosystem goods and services in marine protected areas)

Under the obligation of States in the UN General comment No. 14 data collection is identified as a matter for a child's best interests. Therefore the method of collection and use of the data must be scrutinized for the cultural and economic interests of children.

#### **Recommendation**

- a. We would strongly advise the Ministry for Vulnerable Children to do research into data collection that uses 'Participatory Data Collection and Modeling' and the account of complex systems in this method.
- b. That a 'clean slate policy' be developed for families, whānau and children who have records of risk and Protection Orders for care and protection of children.

We hope to provide further information on participatory modeling at the Select Committee hearing.

## Conclusion

This submission takes a systemic perspective to the position of Māori within New Zealand society and raises the issue of economic status at a primary matter to be addressed.

Economic policy is therefore part of the overall context of the Children, Young Persons and their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation bill.

In the Cabinet Papers preceding the 2016 bill the Covenant for Children was included. However the article on Living standards as a necessary provision for children to grow up able to participate in society, was struck out. Indeed, the Covenant is not included the 2016 bill. This indicates that economic issues are being excluded from the suite of policies that are needed to bring parity for Maori, and to plan for the elimination of poverty in New Zealand.

We request that the recommendations in this submission become developed by appropriate Māori Advisors.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit. We would like to appear to the select Committee in person(s)

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for Public Issues for the Methodist church.

## **APPENDIX**

## An historical lens for the first part of this submission

From our knowledge of the operation of the 1989 CYPF legislation, the real issues are not the failure of the legislation, but rather the failure to adequately resource the implementation of the legislation.

We refer directly to the profile of Māori vis-à-vis 'non-Maori' in Puao te Ata-Tu, 1988, and compare that to the profile for 2015. We select infant mortality, school qualifications, and unemployment and as three indicators for comparison with the figures for 2015.

1988	2015
Infant mortality rate 19 per hundred live	Maori 13.5 compared to 8.9 non-Maori live
births, compared to non-Maori 11 per 1000	births.
births	
School qualifications: 62% Maori leave	Maori without Level 2 NCEA 40% compared
school without school certificate compared	to 18% Pakeha (noting different
to 28% non-Maori	identification categories in the census)
Maori unemployment is 14% of Maori	Unemployment rate of Maori in 2013 14.5%
Labour force compared to non-Maori 3.7%	compared with 5% Pakeha/European, and
	the rate for under 24yr olds is 29%
	compared to 14%.

#### References.

http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/tatau-kahukura-maori-health-statistics/nga-mana-hauora-tutohu-health-status-indicators/infant-health

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/school\_leavers\_with\_ncea\_level\_2\_or\_above

http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\_for\_stats/income-and-work/employment\_and\_unemployment/ethnic-labour-force-stats-by-age.aspx.

This comparative table draws a sketch of a persistent profile of Māori disadvantage . The Child Poverty Action Group submission provides detailed information on child poverty data, and on current profiles of poverty.

The main points to make of this comparison is that Puao Te Ata-Tu is that this profile speaks of institutional racism that persists in the operations of the Ministry for Social Development / Ministry for Vulnerable Children, and that the profile of Māori disadvantage cannot be addressed separately from the economic hardship that is still a reality for a significant percentage of the Maori population.

Observations from the Fifth Periodic Review of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child drew attention to the embedded poverty and vulnerability of Maori children and whānau.

The Periodic Review identified failure to provide the fundamental rights of children in New Zealand. See 'Concluding Observations on the fifth periodic report of New Zealand' (CRC/C/NZL/CO/5). Included here are sections directly related to the removal of tamariki into state control and institutions and issues related to rights to identity and rights to culture and whānau support.

The Committee includes the following observations:

- 7 (b) Consider a different name for the proposed Ministry for Vulnerable Children, and avoid the categorization of children, in law and policy, which may lead to stigmatization (p.2)
- D. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, and 13-17) Right to identity
- 19. While appreciating the State party's efforts to preserve Māori identity, including through language and television programmes, the Committee is concerned that these efforts remain insufficient and recommends that the State party:
- (a) Intensify efforts to promote and foster Māori language, culture and history in education and increase enrolment in Māori language classes;
- (b) Ensure that Māori children adopted by non-Māori parents have access to information about their cultural identity;
- (c) Ensure that all government agencies developing legislation and policies affecting children take into account the collective dimension of Māori cultural identity and the importance of their extended family (whānau) for Māori children's identity.

(#Hands off Our Tamariki: <a href="https://tewhareporahou.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/hands-off-our-tamariki-an-open-letter/">https://tewhareporahou.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/hands-off-our-tamariki-an-open-letter/</a> and <a href="https://www.refworld.org/docid/587ceb574.html">https://www.refworld.org/docid/587ceb574.html</a>

## **Vulnerability, Poverty and Work**

Puao Te- Ata-Tu recommendations for addressing poverty are extensive and include restructuring the benefit to facilitate more part time work, provide training, offer flexibility to 'accommodate the special nature of Maori adoptions', provide incentives to work, and to support entrepreneurship. (Puo Te-Ata-Tu S. 99-100).

In recent years we have seen growth in Māori entrepreneurship, which is no doubt associated with Treaty Settlements. However the drive to get people off benefits continues to have a punitive orientation and is used as a spur to cut back the costs of benefits by getting people into work. In reality work is often casualized, low paid labour with poor working conditions and does not solve poverty.

## Professional capacity and capability to work with whanau and tamariki

In Puao Te Ata-Tu there is a strong theme of resourcing for families, and also a strong theme of resourcing for social work capability. To achieve this there needs to be proactive policies to encourage Maori professionals to work with children at risk and their families, and for capability development of non-Māori professionals, including social workers, to work appropriately with tamariki and whānau.

These imperatives are substantially evaded in the new Children, Young Persons (Oranga Taimaiti) legislation bill. The establishment of Whānau Ora addresses the recommendations for resources and management of services becoming entrusted to Maori.