



RE: LU24-010243 REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Operational

1. Could you please clarify what role the Department of Corrections will play in the activity? The AEE identifies that the facility is under the operation of Department of Corrections, but the Applicant provides oversight and accountability for operations.

I am just wanting to make sure this is clear given the amount of potentially incorrect information that is currently circulating, and the concerns previously raised on the Applicant's behalf in relation to this.

The Pūwhakamua reintegration service is not managed by The Department of Corrections – nor the proposed facility – all operations are carried out by staff employed through the Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust. The Department of Corrections has however allocated two dedicated Probation Officers from Rotorua Community Corrections to our kaupapa, who share our client caseload. They visit the site at least once a week, but are often included in site welcomes or wānanga in addition to this. Our kaupapa is unique in that Corrections staff come to us; our residents do not have to travel into town to report in weekly.

We have steadily grown our partnership with the Department of Corrections over the past few years. The working relationship between our organisations is clear – the Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust is the independent operator of the reintegration service. Our service delivery is funded through the Department of Corrections by way of a multi-year Outcome Agreement, and we enjoy a positive relationship with the Bay of Plenty Corrections reintegration staff and the Community Partnerships and Pathways team based at National Office.

Our Trust would like to reiterate once again that the proposed project on Puaiti Road is not a corrections facility, nor a justice residence – we are a small-scale tikanga Māori reintegration provider. Our sole purpose is to support individuals in their reintegration journey to the point where they realise ever increasing levels of self-worth and community contribution. Their growth as contributing members of society will ensure that they in return give back positively to their own communities in the future.

Our dedicated staff have worked with these men for several years in prison; they have been on our waitlists a long time for the opportunity to come and work with us. We do not advocate for their release at the Parole Board if we do not believe they are ready, or they still have work to do. The men released on parole have all completed their required rehabilitation and have served their time; they cannot be released to our facility if the Parole Board consider them an undue risk to the community. The punitive element to their sentence is behind them, and they now are afforded the chance to prove themselves whilst on parole and make steps to ensure they never return to the justice system. We are not driven by placement numbers - it is in our interest to only accept men who are ready for change. This ethos contributes to our marked success rates in reducing recidivism.

2. How would the community be guaranteed that residents would be unable to leave the facility at night (i.e. by pushing through bushes that are not monitored by cameras)? Electronic monitoring may be useful after a breach has occurred, but other than the chance of being sent back to prison, what assurances are there that there won't be 'breakouts'? How is the curfew monitored? What is the proposed response to participants absconding?

The overnight curfew is monitored by staff living on the premises. Security cameras will alert any movement to staff during curfew hours that is outside of the permitted radius. But we must again emphasise, that restraining men behind bars is not what we do – the wording of this question insinuates that the nature of our work is custodial. No participants have absconded from our service during curfew hours in our six years of operation to date. In the unlikely event that a participant would abscond from the site, both the Police and Community Corrections would be notified immediately.

3. Please confirm that electronic monitoring will operate effectively in this location.

The Department of Corrections has confirmed that they can provide the Trust with an Electronic Monitoring feasibility report for the proposed site, which will be shared with Council in early 2025. We are aware that there can be limited reception in certain areas of Waikite Valley, although the One NZ network works well at the proposed site location on Puaiti Rd. We also plan to install Starlink to further improve our connectivity, removing the need for ADSL, VDSL and fibre solutions. Technology in the form of discreet Cel-Fi boosters and RF beacons can be used as necessary on site (within keeping of the environment) and are highly effective for use in rural areas.

4. How are the participants in the program helped to integrate back into society if they are living remotely from the community, other than having access to support providers that come to them and family visits? Will they also be supported to learn about where to access services in Rotorua when they are escorted to work there?

For our organisation, residential restrictions on parole do not look the same as others serving community sentences e.g. home detention. Whether a man is subject to full or partial residential restrictions as part of his parole conditions, he is managed accordingly and granted absences to take part in all group activities done together offsite during working hours. Being subject to residential restrictions at Pūwhakamua does not mean that the men are locked down, nor does it mean they have nothing to do – they are kept busy with a focus on routine and purposeful activity, advancing their skills every day. Residents will be taken into town in our company minivan a couple of times a week for general shopping and other personal services and interests. One-off trips to town also occur as necessary where appointments or activities have specific attendance times for individuals.

5. What is the process for vetting visitors to the site, and how can the community be assured that the facility does not attract other people into the community who have gang associations or may be considered ‘undesirable’?

Whānau visitors are vetted through our General Manager alongside Community Corrections and assessed for their suitability as sponsors for their family member. This includes ruling out anyone with any known gang associations or activity that has come to the attention of Police, or whether the visitor is subject to any sentence or order of their own. All visitors take part in a formal welcome and induction to site and are expected to abide by site rules whilst they are there. Any breach of site rules by a visitor will result in a stand down and review. We emphasise that we do not allow open door access to anyone outside of Police or Community Corrections, or random visitation.

One of the key reasons that we have chosen Waikite Valley to settle, is that its very location by nature reduces the risk of coming into contact with individuals who may be labelled as “undesirable”. During the process of submitting our application, we have not advertised the fact that we are planning to relocate to that district. The community have however chosen to take the issue to the media. Regardless, we do not anticipate any presence of gangs within the community – our Trust has always been very public around the fact that this is not how we operate, and it is not something that is tolerated – a view which has been noted and respected by senior gang members throughout the Bay of Plenty. In our six years of operation, we have never had unannounced visits from local gang factions to site – despite living only 10km from the town centre, with a heavy gang presence in Rotorua. The proposed section on Puaiti Road was identified as a special environment where our residents can reintegrate at a measured pace within a strong rural community located a healthy (yet still practical) distance away from Rotorua.

How can the community be assured that there will be no active gang members in the facility? How does the process of establishing gang connections work in practice?

We do not take active gang members at Pūwhakamua. If a potential resident has any form of gang background or association, this must be fully annulled before they are even considered for our programme. This must occur and be sustained well in advance of their release. We work with Intel staff at prisons to determine whether an individual has distanced himself from gang associates or not – this is facilitated by monitoring of phone calls, security intelligence reports and observations from unit staff. If the matter of his exiting a gang is still in question, the Police can often confirm whether the individual is still registered on the National Gang List (NGL). If staff were to see any hint of gang behaviour or hear conversations of that nature on site, the resident would be removed from the programme. The Council should note that not all residents at Pūwhakamua hold previous gang associations. The institution of gangs does not align with the core values and teachings of our kaupapa, and applicants are well aware of these criteria. The Trust has supported several men to have prominent gang tattoos professionally removed over the last few years.

7. What are the antisocial behavior guidelines? Is there a document that Council can assess?

Please find our Site Rules attached for your reference.

8. What is the management procedure or policy for dealing with either unauthorised visitors to the facility or those that are asked to move off – what prevents them from parking close by and would the policy push the problem out into the community? Who would be responsible for calling the Police if this was to happen?

Should we ever receive unauthorised visitors to the facility which could not be managed as a team, site staff would be responsible for calling the Police – the same as any other residence or place of business in New Zealand who noted an unwelcome third party on or nearby their property. We do not operate a prison – we do not employ officers or security guards. The safety of the community and our staff is paramount, and the Police are of course the most appropriate people to manage a situation of that nature.

9. Are there opportunities for the facility to be integrated into the community, through regular meetings or organized activities, for example?

Absolutely – within our initial information pack delivered to key stakeholders and Puaiti Road residents, we welcomed the opportunity to integrate into the local community; *“We will be setting up a Community Liaison Group to connect the community into the service on a long-term basis. This provides an opportunity for any concerns to be raised by neighbours, alongside looking at ways for the men to positively contribute to our shared community.”* (Page 7)

Our residents want to build positive community networks and have done so at our current site including supporting the elderly, assisting with local working bees and helping in rural and agricultural work and employment capacities. Given the chance, they will take up any opportunity to help the local community and to learn new skills. These men are on a journey of change; the Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust provides them with the practical tools, mentorship, professional networks and opportunities to help them achieve their long-term goals.

Social Effects and Assessment

“This includes concerns over the comprehensiveness of the information relied upon and the methodology that has been followed in obtaining and analysing that information. In this regard we note that consultation with the local community appears to have been limited to properties in the immediate vicinity (1.0km radius), the Waikite Valley School, and there has been no community meeting. There are also concerns that unannounced direct approaches have been made to some residents by those that will be directly involved in the operation of the activity. This is not consistent with advice provided by Rebecca.

The Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust have carried out community engagement in accordance with the plan submitted to Rotorua Lakes Council for review in advance, which included the planned dates of engagement and who would be carrying out the in-person visits i.e. representatives from The Department of Corrections and

the Trust. Nine properties were engaged with as part of this process, within a 6km radius (from the junction of Te Kopia Rd/Puaiti Rd to the south, and Dods Rd/Puaiti Rd to the north). Waikite Valley School was also engaged with later on in line with their availability, on advice from Rebecca Foy at Formative. A large-scale community meeting was considered, but ultimately it was decided that smaller scale meetings with residents or other interested parties would be far more productive. This would afford individuals the space to have their voices heard and ask questions without undue influence from the wider group; to allow for more meaningful conversation, and be provided with the necessary reassurances and additional information.

Two weeks after initial engagement through door knocking, follow up invitations were delivered to the letterboxes of the same nine properties on Puaiti Rd, inviting residents to engage with us in person in a central Rotorua location on a nominated date, with the offer of an alternative date or location of their choosing in line with their availability and comfort levels. There was zero uptake from residents to meet with our Trust to ask questions or voice their concerns. Our staff have not conducted unannounced or follow up visits in person to residents outside of the community engagement plan submitted to Council at any time.

There is significant community interest in this Proposal, with approximately 40 separate members of the Waikite Valley Community making direct contact with Council through various channels. In addition to general concerns about social effects relating to matters such as safety, amongst the key themes in that correspondence was a lack of wider community engagement and consultation; potential misinterpretation/representation of views in the consultation record; concerns over the running of the facility at its previous Rotokawa Road location; and the manner in which the Site was acquired."

The Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust have carried out community engagement in accordance with the plan submitted to Rotorua Lakes Council in advance. We are aware of the multitude of enquiries that have come in as a result of our resource consent application. Many of the enquiries received to our main point of contact with the information pack to residents – engagecentral@corrections.govt.nz – came from properties located a considerable distance away from the proposed site e.g. Ngakuru, 25 kms away. We do not consider these individuals to be affected parties. We live a peaceful existence and make a point of looking after our neighbours and ensuring the continued quiet enjoyment of their own property. When the need arises to travel into Rotorua township, our staff will transport residents along the most direct route i.e. Puaiti Rd-Te Kopia Rd-Waikite Valley Rd-Hossack Rd-Corbett Rd-Tumunui Rd to State Highway 5. We have no reason to drive past Waikite Valley School, nor enter the suburbs of Ngakuru, Horohoro, or Kapenga, unless a road closure means that we must take an alternative route.

We would like to make clear to Council that we have never operated from Rotokawa Road – our current site is located on a rural property off Te Ngae Road. Any concerns emanating from individuals within the Rotorua district around this location should be disregarded as misinformation. Any questions relating to this matter should instead be referred to the persons responsible for the associated Māori Reservation at Rotokawa i.e. the Rotokawa Bath Trustees.

We do not consider the “manner” in which the Puaiti Road site was acquired as relevant to the resource consent application currently before Council. We have made it clear that the section at Lot 1, 671 Puaiti Rd was not procured by either the Department of Corrections, nor the Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust. The land was purchased through private sale for the purpose of whānau settlement, long term. If we are successful in obtaining the required resource consent for the proposed activity, the Trust will lease from the landowner for an agreed number of years.

10. A Social Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person in the fields of social research and/or the assessment of social effects.

We will source a suitably qualified individual to conduct a Social Impact Assessment, and the additional information will be forthcoming in early 2025.

Earthworks

Questions 11 – 13 – These requests for information will be reviewed by BSK Consulting Engineers, and the additional information will be forthcoming in early 2025.

Landscape and Visual Effects

Questions 14 - 24 – These requests for information will be reviewed by Darin Grant Design and a suitably qualified Landscape Architect, and the additional information will be forthcoming in early 2025.