

**SUBMISSION ON A PUBLICLY OR LIMITED NOTIFIED
APPLICATION CONCERNING RESOURCE CONSENT
Section 96 Resource Management Act 1991**

To:

Chief Executive
Rotorua Lakes Council
Private Bag RO3029
ROTORUA

Name of Submitter: Joyce Mahe

This is a submission on an application from: Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust (TACT)

for a Resource Consent to establish and operate a reintegration facility at 473 Puaiti Road, Ngakuru, Rotorua (Lot 1 DP 585350), as a non-complying activity under the Rotorua District Plan.

The specific parts of the application that my submission relates to are;

- The establishment and operation of the reintegration facility.
- The kaupapa of the programme being grounded in tikanga Māori and whānau-focused reintegration.
- The potential for cultural, social, and community well being outcomes for participants and their families.

My submission is in support of the application by the Tikanga Aroro Charitable Trust (TACT) to establish a reintegration facility in Waikite Valley. As someone who was born in nearby Rotorua of Pacific descent and someone who works in the hauora sector, I support this proposal not only from a professional standpoint but from a place of deep care for the well being of our communities.

In my mahi, I have worked alongside whānau navigating the immense challenges of the Corrections system. One mother I supported was caring for two young children while her partner was in prison. I saw first-hand the toll this took on her — managing regular phone calls, long-distance travel to different facilities, and online parole meetings — all while trying to keep her whānau strong and stable. The emotional and logistical weight of this experience was immense, and yet there was so little support available to help ease that burden.

While reintegration programmes are not a complete solution, I believe that if her partner had access to a supported, community-based facility — one grounded in cultural values and close to home — the strain on the whole whānau would have been significantly less. The opportunity to reconnect in a safe and guided environment would have brought relief, structure, and hope.

Moreover, the article *The Social Integration of Māori Prisoners* by Kim Workman highlights the importance of cultural identity and whānau support in successful reintegration. He stresses that a justice system which acknowledges and incorporates Māori values, tikanga, and whānau-centered approaches is essential to helping Māori prisoners reintegrate effectively. This aligns strongly with the kaupapa of TACT's programme, which is grounded in tikanga Māori and focused on restoring identity and relationships.

Though I am not Māori, I am Tongan and work within hauora, where I witness daily the healing power of culturally responsive support. Recognising and embracing cultural identity is vital to well being and rehabilitation, and programmes that centre Māori values can provide the framework for stronger, more resilient whānau and communities.

It is also important to consider the intergenerational impact of incarceration. Tamariki of incarcerated parents face increased risks of mental health challenges and social hardship. However, reintegration facilities that support family connection and cultural reconnection can reduce these risks by strengthening family units and providing a stable environment for healing. As noted by Neil Campbell, who was the Director Māori at the Department of Corrections, tikanga-based programmes that prioritise whānau relationships and cultural identity are showing early success in reducing reoffending and improving social outcomes for both individuals and their families. These programmes underscore the importance of culturally grounded, whānau-focused approaches in breaking cycles of incarceration across generations.

In recognition of local concerns about limited telecommunications coverage in the Waikite Valley area, I suggest that TACT consider a practical step to support emergency communication. This could involve the purchase and maintenance of two satellite phones—one for the facility and one for a trusted local community member. These would provide a reliable backup communication method in the event of an emergency or incident, ensuring quick coordination with emergency services. The area is serviceable by major satellite networks, ensuring dependable coverage. Additionally, in 2024 Starlink offer free or subsidised connectivity for rural educational or community initiatives, which could benefit both the facility and wider community if eligible. The Trust would cover all associated costs. This is a small but meaningful investment in safety, trust, and shared responsibility.

The facility proposed in Waikite Valley offers more than just a place of transition; it offers a foundation for healing, identity, and whānau reconnection. It is an important step towards addressing the complex needs of people leaving prison and their families, and fostering a safer, healthier community for all.

I seek the following decision from the consent authority that the resource consent be granted in full. I also encourage the Council to work closely with TACT to support the successful integration of the facility into the local community, and ensure ongoing communication and collaboration with local residents where appropriate.

I do not wish to be heard in support of my submission

Signature of submitter

Date:



25 June 2025

