

18 February 2026

Dear Mayor Funnell cc Councillors and Chief Executive of Taupo District Council,

RE: Treaty of Waitangi references in Council papers with Suggested Amendment

I am writing to formally request that Council agenda templates be amended so that they contain **neutral, descriptive statements of statutory obligations only**, and do **not embed interpretive or normative political statements** as default framing within agenda items.

In particular, I am asking that the following statement no longer be included as a standard component of Council agendas:

“Taupō District Council is committed to meeting its statutory Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and acknowledges partnership as the basis of Te Tiriti. This requires both parties to treat and work with each other in good faith and show good will to reflect the partnership relationship. We acknowledge these responsibilities are distinct from the Crown’s Treaty obligations and lie within a Taupō District Council context”.

My concern is not with the Treaty of Waitangi itself, nor with Council meeting its statutory obligations. It is with the inclusion of a **normative and interpretive statement** of this nature as an unexamined premise within every agenda item.

Agenda templates are not neutral once they embed **contested interpretations of law, history, or governance roles as settled fact**. Statements that go beyond describing statutory requirements and instead assert particular understandings of concepts such as ‘partnership’ are political in a governance sense: they prescribe a values-based framework rather than simply stating legal duties.

To demonstrate that this issue is one of neutrality rather than obstruction, I suggest the following replacement wording, which confines itself to a neutral description of statutory obligations and aligns with the terminology used in legislation:

“Taupō District Council is required to meet its statutory obligations relating to the Treaty of Waitangi. These obligations are given effect through relevant legislation, policies, and decision-making processes within the Council’s functions and powers”.

Note that I have deliberately used ‘Treaty of Waitangi’, as this is the terminology used in the Local Government Act 2002.

For this reason, questioning the neutrality of agenda framing is **directly relevant to the substance of items being considered**, because it affects how councillors are implicitly expected to approach deliberation. It is not a procedural side issue, **nor should it require a Notice of Motion in order to be raised**.

Requiring a Notice of Motion in this context has the effect of insulating agenda framing from scrutiny and raising the threshold for legitimate challenge, let alone that it might be simply resisted because of individual member’s political persuasion i.e. just imagine if we started to include ACT

Party statements in Council agendas. I do not consider that outcome consistent with open and transparent governance, and in my opinion neither should you.

I raise this matter so that we can clearly distinguish between **neutral administrative content** and **political or interpretive statements**, and ensure that agenda materials support free and unconstrained deliberation by elected members.

I would appreciate **confirmation in writing of how this request will be addressed**, including whether the agenda template will be amended or retained as currently worded.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Duncan Campbell
Taupō District Council • 30 Tongariro Street, Taupō 3330
Private Bag 2005 • Taupō 3352 • New Zealand
M +640272078005 E councillorcampbell@taupo.govt.nz
www.taupo.govt.nz