

# Respect & Dignity Report



A Cultural Assessment for Separating Mortuary  
Byproducts from the  
Municipal Sewage System

Ian Ruru  
Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa

[Updated April 2017]

## Separating Mortuary Byproducts from the Municipal Sewage System

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Manawa mai te mauri nuku  
Manawa mai te mauri rangi  
Ko te mauri kei au  
He mauri tipua  
Ka pakaru mai te po  
Taumai te mauri  
Haumi e Hui e Taiki e!

### Cultural Assessment Methodology

#### Literature Review

An extensive literature review was undertaken of archives held by Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa. The following diagram summarises the view of our kaumatua that tupapaku<sup>1</sup> are extremely tapu and therefore disposal of any part of the deceased into a waterway or sewage system is extremely repugnant. This practice violates all spiritual and cultural views and degrades the mauri of the receiving environment.

### The Wisdom of Turanganui a Kiwa Elders



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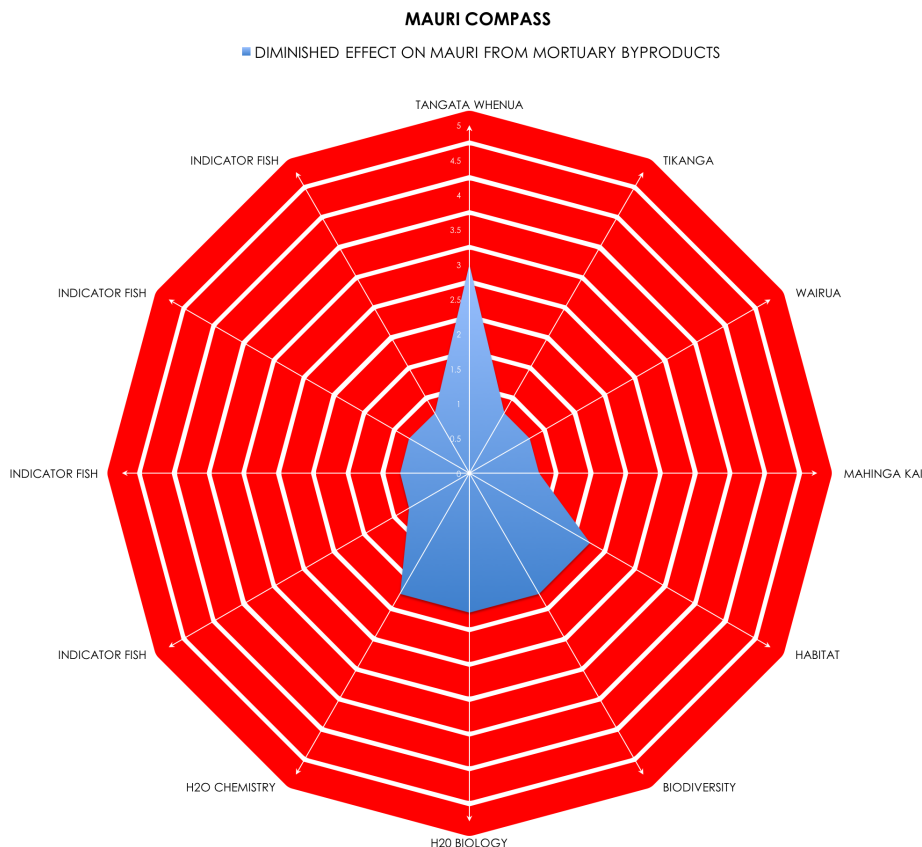
The preferred option has always been that mortuary by-products are separated from the sewage system and then treated in a land-based, through-land solution.

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<sup>1</sup> The deceased.

### Evaluation

The Mauri Compass model was used to evaluate and articulate the impact that mortuary byproducts have on the mauri of the receiving environment. The red parts of following diagram represent the diminished effect on the various attributes. Blue is good, red is bad.



### Hui a Iwi

The view to separate mortuary byproducts with land-based treatment was then presented at two hui for endorsement. Firstly at *Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa Hui a Iwi* which was held at Tapuihikitia Marae on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016. And then a presentation, by Ray Farmer and Ian Ruru, was held at *Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa Kahui Kaumatua Hui* which was held at Turanga Ararau on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016.

In both instances there was unanimous support for the separation of land-based treatment of mortuary byproducts. There was also strong interest from the attendees to be involved with further developments.

## Separating Mortuary Byproducts from the Municipal Sewage System

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### Separating Mortuary Byproducts from the Municipal Sewage System:

1. This is consistent with respecting the dignity of our 'dearly departed' our deceased loved ones and treating their whole being with the same level of respect and dignity.
  - 1.1. The body of the deceased is treated with the utmost care and respect. We recommend that all parts of the deceased are treated in the same manner.
2. This is consistent with the Wastewater Treatment Project and associated Resource Consent requirements.
  - 2.1. Gisborne City is progressing an admirable Wastewater Treatment process. This recommendation is consistent with these plans and Consent Requirements.
3. This is consistent with the beliefs and views that Tangata Whenua have held since the municipal sewage system was built in 1965.
  - 3.1. A quote from a previous Tangata Whenua Report.

The disposal of body products into the waterways either from tupapaku (people that have passed away), general public ablutions and hospitals was found to be repugnant to all the interviewees. Body parts and products are considered extremely tapu. These products were usually returned to the earth. [Page 28: Tangata Whenua Perspectives on Wastewater: Report to Gisborne District Council \(2000\)](#)

### Recommendations:

1. That mortuary byproducts be separated from the municipal sewage system
2. That a land-based solution (such as the 'Wisconsin Mound') be investigated. Ray Farmer is our specialist in this area.
3. That a Feasibility Report be developed for the Wastewater Management Committee.

Ian Ruru

Te Runanga o Turanganui a Kiwa

Appendix 1: Tangata Whenua Perspectives on Wastewater. A Report to the Gisborne District Council (2000).

[ADDED TO REPORT APRIL 2017]

**SUBMISSION TO THE MAORI AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:**

**Inquiry into whanau access to and management of Tupapaku**

Oral Submission from Ian Ruru on behalf of Te Aitanga a Mahaki Trust  
11:00AM 5th April 2017

Tena koe e Rangatira. Tena koutou, otira tena tatau katoa.

Tena tatau o tatau tini mate, ratau kua wheturangitia, kua katohia i te ringa kaha o aitua. Na reira nga mate, haere, haere, haere atu ra.

Ana, ka hoki mai ki a tatau te hunga ora. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatau katoa.

Ko Maungahaumi te maunga  
Ko Waipaoa te Awa  
Ko Te Aitanga a Mahaki te Iwi  
Ko Ian Ruru ahau

Thank you for hearing my submission relating to this, the Maori Affairs Committee Inquiry into whanau access to, and management of Tupapaku.

I am representing Te Aitanga a Mahaki as their environmental kaitiaki and I would like to briefly outline three key points so as to allow the Committee time to ask any questions.

Firstly, the Te Aitanga a Mahaki Trust exists to 'advance and promote Te Aitanga a Mahaki as an Iwi.' The Mahaki Trust represents Te Aitanga a Mahaki as an "iwi authority" for the purposes of the Resource Management Act 1991 and as the "mandated iwi organisation" under the Maori Fisheries Act 2004.

The Trust represents its twelve marae spread throughout the largest catchment in the Gisborne region, the 2,200 square kilometre Waipaoa River Catchment.

Secondly, my submission is titled "Respect and Dignity: separating mortuary fluids and byproducts from the Gisborne municipal sewage system".

## Separating Mortuary Byproducts from the Municipal Sewage System

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To Te Aitanga a Mahaki, all parts of the tupapaku, the deceased, are extremely tapu and sacred and should be treated with respect and dignity. The disposal of body products into the waterways from tupapaku has always been and remains repugnant. Body parts and products are considered extremely tapu and were usually returned to Papatuanuku, the earth.

For over half a century mortuary byproducts have formed part of the Gisborne municipal sewage system which has been discharged into our rivers and ocean. This practice violates our kawa and tikanga, our cultural and Maori scientific views and degrades the mauri and life force of Turanganui a Kiwa and its people. The practice continues to be contentious.

Thirdly, Te Aitanga a Mahaki advocates that a local solution to this local problem be investigated.

How might the solution look? Firstly, separation of mortuary fluids and byproducts from the sewage system. Secondly treatment of these byproducts through land-based, through-earth options. "That which comes from Papatuanuku, returns to Papatuanuku."

Not only will this meet our expectations in terms of kawa and tikanga but it will also deliver the respect and dignity our tupapaku deserve.

Whilst we acknowledge that this is a local iwi to local government issue we are thankful for the opportunity to speak to the Maori Affairs Committee. Both to share our experiences from Turanga nui a Kiwa and as an opportunity to listen and learn from iwi throughout the country.

No reira, kia ora tatou.

I am happy to answer any questions from the Committee.