



Te Kāhui Tātari Ture | Criminal Cases Review Commission

NGĀ ĀHUATANGA O TE TIRITI TOHU

SMALL-MEDIUM ORGANISATION HIGHLY COMMENDED

**WATCH
VIDEO**



THE STORY

Indigenous peoples are over-represented in the prisons of every colonised country in the Western world, and Aotearoa New Zealand is no exception. More than half of our prison population are Māori and the considerable disparities across the criminal justice sector are well known and documented.

Established in April 2020, Te Kāhui Tātari Ture Criminal Cases Review Commission is the independent Crown entity for investigating possible miscarriage of justice cases. It is the fourth such entity globally with the primary mandate to investigate wrongful convictions, sentences, or both within the New Zealand court system.

“We are set up to serve those disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system – Māori, Pasifika, women, and youth,” says Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive) Parekawhia Mclean. “Research indicates that people who have been or are incarcerated have low trust in the current justice system, which has periodically shown bias and subjected many people to racism and discrimination, contributing to the ongoing trauma within their communities.”

The everyday reality of investigating such cases is a heavy burden for Te Kāhui Tātari Ture staff, of whom nearly 50 per cent are Māori, including Chief Executive Parekawhia McLean.

Over the past three years they have developed a multifaceted approach to support and upskill staff. Beginning with recruitment, the organisation focuses on creating a workforce pipeline that recognises the importance of incorporating te ao Māori expertise and capability within its operations.

“The Board has recently agreed to the establishment of a Māori advisory group to support the work of the Commission,” adds Parekawhia. “This is currently being set up to start in the next financial year. The kaupapa of the group will be co-designed with members from the outset.”

Te Kāhui Tātari Ture has already prioritised co-design with employees, senior leaders, and Commissioners, establishing a set of values and pillars based on Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā. These guide decision-making processes at all levels. Additionally, the Kairaranga Tāngata team has developed Te Pou Tarāwaho, an outreach programme that involves engaging with mana whenua, Māori and Pacific public sector agencies and entities to raise awareness about Te Kāhui Tātari Ture.

Parekawhia says this has involved meeting with and developing relationships with partner organisations, such as the Māori Women's Welfare League and Te Hunga Rōia Māori, to work with those who have been affected by the justice system.

“Engaging with iwi and mana whenua has enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of their perspectives.”

A 13-week internship programme has been introduced, in partnership with the University of Waikato, for those interested in removing bias from the justice system. To date all interns have been Māori students studying law. Te Kāhui Tātari Ture is also increasing usage of te reo Māori across its premises, in its branding (including across social media channels), and through operating procedures and policies, as well as offering te reo classes, and karakia and waiata practice.

The focus is on fostering workplace inclusion, and ensuring a cohesive working environment that enables people to bring their best selves into the workplace, says Parekawhia.

“We believe these are essential markers of our journey as an organisation.”

THE CHALLENGE

To support kaimahi in their personal and professional lives, so they can better serve those disproportionately affected by the criminal justice system and cater to that diverse group of people's cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic needs.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Development of Te Pou Tarāwaho, an outreach programme that involves meeting with mana whenua from across the country, Māori and Pacific public sector agencies and Māori entities
- An employee-led health safety wellbeing programme designed through Health Safety Wellbeing Committee reflecting the four pillars of health from Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā

“Engaging with iwi and mana whenua has enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of their perspectives.”

- 13-week internship programme in partnership with the University of Waikato
- Karakia, waiata practice, planting a nīkau tree, ngā whakawhetai gratitudes and te reo Māori sessions – all employee-led initiatives supported by the senior leadership team
- Quarterly mental health support through regular sessions with a clinical psychologist and further support through EAP services
- The introduction of noho puku days (a paid day of leave for staff to centre their wellbeing)
- Kia Toipoto Action Plan that sets targets that focus on closing the gender, Māori, Pacific and ethnic pay gaps to reduce workplace inequities
- Implementation of ngā uara values, a co-designed initiative with employees and Commissioners which are used regularly in decision-making framework
- The introduction of He Oranga Pou Manawa, an employee development framework, co-designed with employees.



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Close to half of kaimahi identify as Māori, including senior leadership team
- Excellent retention of kaimahi Māori (0% turnover from July 2020 to June 2022).
- 96 per cent of employees participated in the February 2023 survey
- Employees indicated they know where to get help if they are struggling and feel supported by Te Kāhui Tātari Ture
- 100 per cent pick-up rate in staff attending and engaging in their quarterly mental wellness check-ups

KEY LEARNING

A specialised workforce with expert skills that can cater to vulnerable Māori communities needs to be supported in their own cultural and mental health and wellbeing.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

Visit diversityworks.nz or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)