The next steps for the United Nation Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**#check with delivery**

**He mihi**

* Acknowledgements to kaumatua, local iwi, whānau, academics, government officials and wider stakeholders.
* Hon Dr Pita Sharples who as Minister of Māori Affairs represented New Zealand when the Government expressed support for the Declaration in 2010.
* Members of the Declaration Working Group and the Iwi Chairs Forum, who have put a lot of time and effort into this kaupapa.
* Kia ora koutou katoa e huihui mai nei i raro i tēnei kaupapa whakahirahira.
* E rere ki ngā whetū! E rere ki te marama!

It means a lot to me that you are all gathered here today at my marae, Ngā Whare Waatea, for this kaupapa.

This is the place where I feel very comfortable, because my family has played a major role in the set up here, and this has been a base for many major hui, over the years.

This marae, for us, is an expression of our own tino rangatiratanga.

Thousands of Maori have come through here over the years and we have programs right across the board that look after our people’s wellbeing and interests.

Our Kura which my wife leads is a place where we exercise self-determination, we set it up because we wanted to give kids opportunities that they never had before and we deliberately set it up on the Marae.

And over there stands Radio Waatea, a way we share who we are with the rest of Aotearoa. A station that I won with my mate JT along with the 96.8 frequency which George FM uses and we won that kaupapa 22 years ago the first Urban Maori frequencies that did not have Iwi backing but we had the backing of our communities South Auckland and West Auckland. We just about have it all here; Whanau Ora, Youth programmes, domestic violence programmes, restorative justice, Marae justice, food bank -I’m so proud of what we do.

However I know for many people who have never been to a marae like this, who may not be Māori – coming here can be scary.

But I can assure you – once you walk through the gates you will be welcomed, you become part of what we have here and you will see, like many visitors before you, see that we have so much in common and share a belief in making Aotearoa the best country for all our children and our whanau to belong to.

This is why I wanted to bring this kaupapa here and talk about the next steps we want to take in moving forward with our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Like Nga Whare Waatea, the Declaration can be a bit scary when you first look through its gates.

But once we talk about it together, wananga, and even argue back and forth about it – it will become a place where talking about self-determination is welcomed, a place where we can share our aspirations and debate our future. It will be something that brings us together as a country.

The Declaration was never meant to divide us. It is not a tool for separatism. It is not something to be afraid of.

That’s what’s made the recent uproar both confusing and disappointing.

Confusing - because we were so proud when Dr Sharples signed the agreement, when the National Government committed to developing a plan to implement it.

And disappointing that there has been a U-turn from that more positive approach to indigenous rights and the continuation and expansion of work that governments of both colours have been working on for years.

So, today my intention is to make clear the steps the Government will take to fulfil our obligations under the Declaration, as signed by Dr Pita Sharples and agreed to by the previous National Government.

The National Government in 2010, said the “Government's decision to formalise its support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will help to restore New Zealand's mana in addressing indigenous rights”.

I agree with that.

I believe that the Declaration, the conversations we will all have together will improve outcomes for all of New Zealand, just like they have when we have had these sorts of conversations before.

And we aren’t alone in this. 148 other countries have also signed up to the declaration and also believe that it will improve outcomes for their own people and, like us, are taking steps to put in place plans to honour the commitments they signed up to.

The Declaration contains 46 articles. They cover a number of issues, from Health and Education, History and Land, it even looks at indigenous rights to their own media.

Within it says we need to:

Recognise “the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.”

I am proud to be part of a Government that has already put these words into action and continues to build on commitments this Government, and previous Governments, have made as part of our obligations to Te Tiriti, and our belief in strengthening our Māori Crown partnerships. Initiatives like:

* Whanau Ora.
* Our Treaty settlement framework and the historic settlements in Te Urewera and the Whanganui River.
* The establishment of Te Arawhiti.
* The work of Te Puni Kokiri.
* Te Ture mō te Reo Māori is a partnership approach to language revitalisation so our language can rightfully thrive in our communities and homes.
* The Governments focus is on delivering health, housing and education.
* The establishment of the Māori Health Authority
* Teaching New Zealand History in schools
* Celebrating Matariki with a public holiday

And those are just a handful of examples.

These are good things. Many of these things are popular. They make us a better country.

And our plan for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People will build on this work, keep building to make us better.

But first, we need to talk, so today I am officially announcing the next stage of our journey.

As many of you will know work was underway under both National and Labour on the development of a Deceleration plan. Like for a lot of thing COVID slowed down that work but we are now in a position to get things moving again.

Cabinet has signed off on to a two-step engagement process to develop the Declaration plan.

The first step is targeted engagement with key iwi and significant Māori organisations to inform the process for the development of a Declaration plan

And the second step is wider public consultation on a draft Declaration plan.

I will work with Pou Tikanga representatives of the National Iwi Chairs Forum to help inform the first phase.

In parallel with that work I will also engage with a small group of independent legal experts with links to the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and expertise in public law.

We want to start the conversations about the Declaration firstly with Māori.

This Declaration is about indigenous peoples so it makes sense we talk with Maori first up.

Developing a Declaration plan will need to be in partnership with Māori and any mahi we do will be consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The aim is to develop a draft Declaration plan by the end of this year to take out to wider public consultation in 2022.

Following this wider public consultation we would look to sign off on a final plan by the end of 2022.

The second part of this process is when we need to hear from all New Zealanders. Because ultimately, it’s about all of us.

We need to hear from everyone. Their thoughts, their ideas, their dreams and aspirations before we map out a pathway which shows us how, as a country, we will get there.

This approach is consistent with the advice of the technical working group, guidance from the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and

Our own best practice guidelines for engagement with Māori.

Now I want to be clear about He Puapua.

He Puapua is not the plan.

He Puapua is a collection of ideas, suggestions aspirations and hopes for Maori– something to add to our discussions, it is provocative and it has been the catalyst in terms of where we are today and I thank the group very much for their contribution and the hard work they have put into this report.

However He Puapua is not Government policy the group who put this together knows this

And from a Government perspective we are not advancing that report. Our focus is on this public consultation process now.

Because before we put in place a plan we must all have a say in what the plan looks like.

This is a good conversation to have.

It might be scary and challenging. But I promise you, take the first step. Walk through the gates. Because ultimately it will be rewarding.

Just like you have done here at Nga Whare Waatea today.

Bring your thoughts about self-determination, about Maori housing and health. Bring you concerns and your aspirations and let’s talk.

You will all be welcomed, you will all be heard and we can keep moving forward together.

No reira tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa….