

Submission by **Te Pūkenga** to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

### Introduction

Te Pūkenga submission is framed within the context of our unique role in the research ecosystem in Aotearoa New Zealand and focuses on those aspects of the Green Paper (and related questions) that are particularly pertinent to Te Pūkenga.

### Overview of Te Pūkenga

As set out in Te Pūkenga Charter and the Ministerial Letter of Expectations, Te Pūkenga must operate in a way that reflects Māori-Crown partnerships in order to ensure that our governance, management, and operations give effect to [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#); recognises that Māori are key actors; and ensures culturally responsive approaches and collaborative ways of working across all activities, including research.

Te Pūkenga is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest provider of tertiary education and we have a network of subsidiaries based in all geographical regions of the country. Our nationwide network includes over 200,000 ākonga, of whom approximately 20% identify as Māori. We see ourselves as having a special role within education and research within Aotearoa New Zealand due to our unique focus on equity, and see an opportunity to build and increase education, research and rangahau career pathways in STEM, STEAM and STEAMM for Māori, and these other priority groups. Our vision is to be a future fit education and research provider, with a dedicated commitment to Tiriti Partnership, supporting opportunities for significant Māori led initiatives, based on Māori aspirations for the future of work and research that is done in partnership. We provide this overview of Te Pūkenga and our research to emphasise the scale and scope of Te Pūkenga within the research ecosystem of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Inclusivity and equity are core principles for Te Pūkenga, as is the emphasis on our regional partnerships with community and industry. Due to our locations and these imperatives, we have close connections within our regions with local and regional iwi, hapū, hāpori and industry.

### Overview of Research in Te Pūkenga

Rangahau Māori and research are central to Te Pūkenga. Our rangahau and research is connected nationally, through the regional clustering of themed rangahau and research activity. Importantly, as we transition to a fully integrated national network, we are rapidly developing the unique capability for nationally relevant research, and regionally focused research with a national lens.

Our research focus is centred on, and most often partnered with, our communities (including hapū and iwi Māori), spanning community health and wellbeing, community and industry capability and environmental and cultural sustainability. This means that there is often a high level of impact within those community or industry contexts.

Te Pūkenga has extant and rapidly developing relationships with kairangahau and researchers in our major universities (nationally and in an increasing number of instances internationally) and with CRIs. We will continue to participate in the PBRF (continuing the participation of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, which now form Te Pūkenga network). Unfortunately, from the perspective of researchers in Te Pūkenga there appears to have been a (perhaps unconscious) systemic cognitive blindness in some research institutions to the critical value of regional, community and industry-partnered research. Te Ara Paerangi review provides an opportunity to address this.

We consider the language, priorities and processes of existing funding frameworks to be inherently exclusive and there is a bias against community and industry-partnered research. We share the Ministry's view that this bias is disadvantageous to Māori, Pacific and indigenous knowledge systems. It also disadvantages the

research undertaken by researchers in Te Pūkenga. These latter share a rangahau/research paradigm which is rooted in the familial, the environmentally local and immediate community, including business.

Te Pūkenga asserts that a fit for purpose funding framework is required to support the rangahau and research strengths which exist in regional Te Pūkenga subsidiaries, so that the impacts of such rangahau and research will benefit this foundational dimension of Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Pūkenga also asserts that fit for purpose funding pathways for this type of research will greatly increase the overall quotient of, and the impact of, research in the Aotearoa New Zealand research ecosystem, because researchers are necessarily working on real problems, identified by communities/industry who also help identify the solutions in a transdisciplinary research approach – research that matters to communities and industry.

We welcome the opportunity to work with iwi and the Ministry to strengthen pathways and to ensure pathways developed for Aotearoa New Zealand are fit-for-purpose funding pathways. We have not indicated potential revised pathways in our submission. We consider this would be premature as careful discussion is required with hapū and iwi regionally to determine appropriate funding pools and access relevant for them. We consider it important to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach as this is likely to continue to disadvantage Māori, particularly in the regions.

#### Te Tiriti

Te Pūkenga has been established by government to lead the transformation of vocational education in Aotearoa New Zealand and has a strong commitment to under-served groups of learners, such as Māori and Pacific learners, learners with disabilities, and learners with special learning needs. As part of this commitment, Te Pūkenga conducts regionally-oriented rangahau and research, within the context of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Because of this context, the commitment of kairangahau and researchers in Te Pūkenga to partner with iwi, hapū and hāpori Māori locally and regionally is very strong. In many instances, these relationships are already well-established. The research ecosystem in Aotearoa New Zealand, in its present form, does not adequately support Government’s commitment to transformation as evidenced in the establishment of Te Pūkenga.

Te Pūkenga offers an opportunity to assist in solving a problem for the RSI sector, which is significant gaps in diversity and understanding and application of Te Tiriti and Mātauranga Māori. The Māori and Pacific workforce will make up 30% of our national workforce within twenty years. It is imperative that we increase the participation of Māori in education, rangahau Māori and research in a way that works for them, so we can make a positive future impact for Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Pūkenga can reach Māori ākonga and shift education practise to meet their needs and increase their success, as well as working closely with our Tiriti Partners to give them agency and authority in the future of research and try new ways of doing this earlier as a result of the reforms, and our commitment.

We consider the research ecosystem must enact Te Tiriti and actively work towards the development of meaningful and productive partnerships. We suggest the research ecosystem in Aotearoa New Zealand should focus on transformational impact. This will require new measures for impact to be developed, including a suitable definition of transformation, and relevant measures. As indicated previously, we are cautious about suggesting a simple ‘one size fits all’ approach. Te Pūkenga has a directorate dedicated to developing Tiriti o Waitangi based policies and practices. We welcome the opportunity to work with iwi and the Ministry to ensure rangahau and research policy can be implemented successfully within both an overall Tiriti framework and a regional focus.

#### Mātauranga Māori

Mātauranga Māori must be accorded the respect and priority enjoyed by other epistemologies and forms of knowledge. Equity of status for rangahau Māori and research is fundamental to Te Pūkenga and, we recommend, should be fundamental to the revised Aotearoa New Zealand research ecosystem.

As an organisation with national reach, Te Pūkenga is well-placed to engage with whānau-hapū-iwi-marae and hāpori throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, to develop and deliver rangahau and research that meets their needs and aspirations. However, with the current bias towards CRIs and universities, the research ecosystem

in Aotearoa New Zealand does not at this time give credence to, or adequately support, rangahau Māori and the recovery and development of Māori knowledge, particularly at local hapū-iwi and community levels. We welcome the opportunity to work with iwi and the Ministry to develop a research ecosystem that incorporates mātauranga Māori and which understands there is an inherent requirement for this to be relevant regionally.

At present, Te Pūkenga subsidiaries cannot readily access research funding or the national research infrastructure to implement our commitment to rangahau Māori and our programmes of research. We must fund this work internally or through relatively small-scale, short-term grants. Fundamental to the rangahau-research focus in Te Pūkenga is the valuing, elevation, and resourcing of rangahau and kaupapa Māori research to ensure its status is equal to that of 'traditional' research.

We consider the redevelopment of the research ecosystem needs to provide a dedicated funding pool for rangahau Māori, the further development of Mātauranga Māori, and the ability for regionally focussed research programmes, specific to iwi and hapū, to access funding.

### Regional Impact

At present, the research, science and innovation environment and infrastructure in Aotearoa New Zealand provides few pathways for access by regionally focussed research programmes or institutions within which the research is being undertaken. Current mechanisms for funding research and measuring benefits are inadequate to measure and recognise distributed benefits. In redeveloping funding mechanisms and access to the research infrastructure, greater access is required for regional projects by institutions (such as Te Pūkenga) that have a strong regional focus.

In addition, the current research ecosystem provides little support for the development of kairangahau Māori (Māori researchers). Te Pūkenga considers this to be inappropriate and the redevelopment of the research ecosystem must accord priority to the development of a cohort of kairangahau Māori across all key disciplines.

Te Pūkenga has a legislated commitment to increase the quality of the workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whilst policy can be national, it is self-evident that people live locally. Te Pūkenga considers greater focus must be placed on using the research ecosystem to develop workforce capability (in particular, STEM and related capability), to ensure equity of participation and that the productivity of our workforce is developed to meet the rapidly changing requirements for an open and competitive economy.

Te Pūkenga also considers significantly greater focus needs to be placed on developing early career researchers (in particular Māori and Pacific ECRs) and addressing sector-wide researcher employment issues such as precarity. At present the funding system places little focus on this and, therefore, the development of future generations of researchers is constrained. Furthermore, Te Pūkenga was in 2021 specifically excluded from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Capability Fund.

### Access to Funding and Infrastructure

#### Funding

Te Pūkenga considers the current commitment to rangahau-research funding in Aotearoa New Zealand to be inadequate. We recommend a significant increase in government's commitment to funding rangahau and research and developing (and maintaining) a world-class national and regionally accessible research infrastructure.

We consider that, whilst researchers and research institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand have achieved excellent outcomes given the funding available, the level of funding is inadequate when considered against OECD peers. Aotearoa New Zealand's current level of commitment to research funding (1.35% of GDP) is lower than the UK (1.70%), our nearest neighbour Australia (2.2%), and Israel (4.94%), South Korea (4.53%), Germany (3.13%). Our researchers compete in a global research environment. If our level of funding is not increased there is a risk the quality and quantum of our research will erode relative to peers.

#### Infrastructure

The research infrastructure in Aotearoa New Zealand is, for many research organisations (including Te Pūkenga) currently something of a 'closed-shop'. Greater access to the research infrastructure is required by

research organisations such as Te Pūkenga. To achieve this there may need to be a partial decoupling of the infrastructure from the organisation hosting the infrastructure. We acknowledge this may have complexity in implementation. However, without a broadening of access to institutions such as Te Pūkenga the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to applied research and technology development in Aotearoa New Zealand will continue to be constrained.

In the case of Te Pūkenga, we are a (new) national institution that has the largest regional reach of any tertiary institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research agenda across the campuses is being aligned and overarching research governance infrastructures are being implemented. To realise this unique research capability, Te Pūkenga must be able to access contestable funding on an equal footing with other tertiary institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. The current system effectively denies access to funding pools relevant to the statutory Te Pūkenga Charter. This is neither appropriate, nor is it acceptable.

Following research funding policies in other OECD countries, we consider there is no basis for excluding Te Pūkenga (or similar institutions) from any research funding streams given that the organisation receives funding for offering degree and postgraduate-level programmes and for the research activities of its staff through the same mechanisms as universities.

Te Pūkenga undertakes a broad array of regional programmes to improve lives and increase knowledge, and is very well placed to lead rangahau and research that supports iwi and hapū in developing their capability and transferring these approaches to the wider sector. Historically, rangahau and research at Te Pūkenga has been strongly focused on smaller regionally focussed projects distributed across our network which, collectively, have a significant impact nationally.

We consider funding pools should be available for projects of this nature. We strongly recommend changes to the structure of funding pools to provide equitable access by Te Pūkenga and other regionally-oriented institutions, to funding pools that enable sustainable growth, expansion and diversification, of rangahau and research, by kairangahau and researchers within Te Pūkenga. There is global evidence that indicates greater provision of smaller amounts of funding is both efficient and helps develop research capacity. Many projects require less than \$100,000 in funding to run. Funding at this level (and for projects which have a regional scope) can, at present, be difficult to locate and obtain.

Our recommendation to the Ministry is that an increase in the funding pool, a diversification of funding pools to ensure funding can be accessed for regional projects, and a broadening of access to the research infrastructure will be fundamental to developing rangahau-research in Aotearoa.

#### [New Zealand Research Council](#)

Te Pūkenga supports structural change that will improve rangahau-research effectiveness in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our submission does not include a formal response to the Universities New Zealand proposal for the establishment of a New Zealand Research Council. We are concerned, however, that the establishment of a national research council, even if it has statutory independence, may lead to entrenching the current situation whereby funding is directed principally to extant research interests and institutions and does not embrace the change of direction advocated in this submission.

We recommend to the Ministry that, should a decision be made to establish a national research council to determine research priorities in Aotearoa New Zealand (including potentially allocation of the level of funding to funding pools), membership of the Council must include a range of actors who are not at present represented in national decision making. If the restructure of the research ecosystem does include the establishment of a research council for Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Pūkenga expects to be a member of the council on equal footing with other members; in particular, to ensure appropriate priorities, policies and funding pools are established and implemented.

#### [Open Access](#)

Te Pūkenga strongly supports open access to rangahau-research publication. We consider open access is crucial to ensure the transfer and application of rangahau-research findings to local industry and communities,

a process limited by traditional academic publishing models. We recommend to the Ministry that the development of an open access capability form a component of the review of the research ecosystem in Aotearoa New Zealand and that it is best developed and supported as a national capability accessible to institutions and individuals across Aotearoa New Zealand and wherever they may live.

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