
Hutt City Proposed District Plan

Hearing Stream 4 – Marae Zone

Hearing Summary Statement

Cristal Bennett

1. My name is Cristal Bennett. I am Pou Whakamahere Kaupapa Here and have been engaged by Hutt City Council as the reporting officer for the Marae Zone topic in the Proposed District Plan Other Zones hearing. I understand that my evidence has been taken as read.

Overview of Marae Zone

2. The Marae Zone recognises the unique role of marae in Lower Hutt. It enables marae activities and development while acknowledging their cultural, social, educational, economic and spiritual functions for mana whenua and the wider community.
 3. I consider the Marae Zone is consistent with the RMA, particularly sections 6(e) and section 8 - Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, as the provisions recognize the relationship of mana whenua with their ancestral lands and taonga.
 4. I consider the issues addressed in the Marae Zone to be largely supported with minor issues raised.
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My Evidence

5. My Section 42A Report addresses six primary issues identified through submissions. I have proposed amendments to refine the balance between enabling marae development and managing localized effects.

Mana Whenua Marae: Te Tatau o Te Pō and Waiwhetū

6. It is vital for the Panel to distinguish between "urban marae" and "mana whenua marae." "Te Tatau o Te Pō and Waiwhetū Marae are established through Tā kai Here (memoranda of partnership) and represent a continuing Te Āti Awa presence.
7. The proposed planning response provides these marae with the flexibility needed to operate as ahi kā—active cultural and economic hubs—rather than static community venues.

8. I have recommended amendments in response to submissions. They retain the chapter's policy direction while improving clarity, implementation and recognition of marae needs.

Te Whiti Park (Contextual Clarification)

9. Regarding the submission by Te Āti Awa concerning Te Whiti Park:
10. The park was part of the original 'Hutt Section 19' Native Reserve, a roughly 100-acre Native Reserve established in 1847 for Te Āti Awa hapū. Mana whenua used the reserve for living, cultivation and grazing, and the name Te Whiti reflects the deep spiritual connection to Te Whiti o Rongomai and Parihaka.
11. During World War II, the Crown used war powers to take the land for a military vehicle park. After the war, the land was not returned to mana whenua (due to rates arrears). It was instead leased to the local council for sports fields and later transferred to council ownership in 1979.
12. Te Whiti Park remains culturally significant to Te Āti Awa. It forms part of the Waiwhetū Pa cultural landscape, adjacent to Waiwhetū Marae, the hills of Pukeatua, the Waiwhetū Stream and the longstanding Te Āti Awa presence in the area.
13. While the cultural landscape is integrated, any potential reserve revocation or change in land tenure under the Reserves Act 1977 is a separate legislative process. Any such process would be separate from this hearing and would require its own assessment, consultation and decision-making. It is not before the Hearings Panel and should not influence the zoning provisions now under consideration.
14. The Marae Zone provisions should therefore be assessed on their own merits, separate from any future decisions about reserve status, land tenure or ownership.

Conclusion

15. I consider the recommended provisions to be the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives of the PDP and the purpose of the RMA. They provide a predictable yet flexible framework that acknowledges the unique dual role of marae as both community anchors and ancestral strongholds.
16. I also acknowledge the unique relationship between Hutt City Council and local marae, grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, and a shared responsibility to support marae as enduring centres of tikanga Māori, whakapapa, manākitanga and community wellbeing within Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai - Lower Hutt.
17. I am happy to answer any questions the hearing panel may have in relation to my evidence.

Cristal Bennett

17th July 2026