

Māori business progressive procurement case studies

Māori business Height sees infrastructure as tool for social change



Height CE Warner Cowin says his team is driven by social and sustainable outcomes and is pictured winning an EY award for a project with Auckland Council Healthy Waters.

Award-winning Māori business Height is driven by strong values while also growing their service as project experts in large infrastructure projects and complex procurement.

CE Warner Cowin says his Auckland based company wants to create opportunities for Māori and Pasifika businesses through their work.

“We care deeply about our community and infrastructure is a major enabler. Not just when it is built, but while it’s being built.”

“Our team superpower is we have a Māori outlook, and we have a lot of women - this enables us to do things differently. We look at holistic benefits for social and sustainable outcomes,” he says.

Warner and his wife Liz took the plunge to start their business eight years ago when they had a 2-week-old and a 2-year-old and he remembers the relief securing his first contract.

“We’ve since grown as a multimillion-dollar business that helps businesses in multiple sectors buy and bid for work and it was all seeded with an opportunity Auckland Council gave us. We also got some mentoring from Te Puni Kōkiri as a small Māori business which really helped,” he says.

Having secured many government contracts from Kāinga Ora to Kiwi Rail, Warner understands the barriers other businesses may face with the procurement process whether they are a buyer or a bidder.

“Sometimes it’s a lack of confidence in knowing the process and other times it is understanding the value you add. Scalability for some Māori businesses is another issue and often there’s a balance from a work and whānau perspective.”

For Height, working with government agencies and being on the All of Government Panel has given them a level of credibility in the market.

“Government has been amazing for us as it has provided consistency. It gives influence at a senior level and you’re not as susceptible to economic highs and lows. It also allows you to upscale your business and as compliance is higher, it makes it easier to get your next contract,” he says.

Height developed a [Sustainable Outcomes Toolkit](#) with Auckland Council Healthy Waters as a resource for others to support sustainable outcomes that tackle social inequality and environmental degradation.

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Iwi design making its mark in Ōtautahi rebuild



The Te Pae Convention Centre design shows strong te ao Māori influence. Artist's impression of Te Pae Convention Centre in Ōtautahi, by Rachel Rakena and Simon Kaan Te Aika 2021, commissioned by Ōtākaro Limited.

Matapopore Charitable Trust is blazing a trail demonstrating the value of Māori indigenous culture in Christchurch's city design.

Devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 meant Ōtautahi needed to rebuild and regenerate. Te Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga established Matapopore Charitable Trust to ensure the rebuild reflects the values, aspirations, and narratives of local iwi, Ngāi Tūāhuriri and Ngāi Tahu.

Matapopore works with Ōtākaro Limited, the Crown-owned company responsible for delivery of the central city Anchor Projects, to incorporate unique iwi narratives into the regeneration of Ōtautahi.

The Crown and iwi partnership shows the unique value Māori businesses bring to the government sector.

Debbie Tikao, General Manager of Matapopore, says they have worked hard to become “intrinsically embedded in the design process.”

As a cultural design and advisory consultancy, Matapopore work collaboratively with Ōtākaro Limited throughout the planning, design, and construction process.

“We had to put structure around what our advice looked like. We developed cultural design frameworks and

strategies. This was our mechanism to take the narratives and values and apply them to a specific situation and look at how they manifest physically.”

Andrew Trevelyan, General Manager, Communication and Engagement for Ōtākaro Limited, says the relationship “built an open and honest platform to ensure local kaupapa and knowledge is shared and used respectfully, and appropriately, within anchor project design and delivery.”

“The collaborative processes with iwi design experts and Ngāi Tahu artists have provided authentic and meaningful value to all anchor projects.”

Debbie and the team are passionate about weaving traditional knowledge and sustainable design into every aspect of the projects. By doing so, Matapopore hopes Ōtautahi will reflect te ao Māori and create a shared identity for all Cantabrians.

“Christchurch had a very strong English character. Ngāi Tūāhuriri and Ngāi Tahu identity had minimal presence within the city. One of the main aspirations of iwi is to have a visible presence in the city and to feel they can see themselves.”

From urban spaces where whānau can gather, to commissioning art from local iwi artists, Debbie believes Ngāi Tahu and Ngāi Tūāhuriri now have a visible presence in Ōtautahi.