

# Tairāwhiti Citizens' Assembly

## CALLS TO ACTION

### April 2025

Managing  
a fair land use  
transition

## Ko wai mātou | About us

We are a collective of people from Te Tairāwhiti, people of this whenua, brought together under the kaupapa of the Citizens' Assembly. This assembly is made up of various members of our community, representing its diversity. We each responded to the call to participate in the process of developing **CALLS TO ACTION** about land use change because we know how important these decisions are for our region.

Together, we've explored the mamae of decisions made from afar, choices that encouraged land uses and practices that have not honoured the shape, spirit, or strength of our whenua. We have seen the toll these decisions take: slips scarring the land, awa choking with debris, and the heavy weight carried by our whānau, especially in the face of a more challenging climate.

Our mahi was to sit with this kōrero and to listen deeply – to science, to mātauranga, to lived experience. From there, we explored what's possible, what must be protected, and what must change.

The result is a series of **CALLS TO ACTION** grounded in the following values:

1. **Te Mana o Te Tairāwhiti**
2. **Te Tiriti o Waitangi me ngā Tikanga**
3. **Te Whakakanohi i te Hapori**
4. **Te Mahi Tahi**
5. **Te Whakawhitiwhiti Kōrero me te Haepapa**

We do not come with blame. We come with open hands, clear eyes, and the conviction that while some action is underway, **large-scale transformation is now urgent. Our way forward requires coordination, collaboration and acceleration.**

We call for a return to balance. To reweaving our relationship between tangata and whenua in a way that nourishes all who call Tairāwhiti home for past, present and future generations.

## Te Moemoeā | Our Vision

***Ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata.***

Together, we imagine a future where our connection to te taiao is healed – where the land is cherished, the people are uplifted, and the mauri of Tairāwhiti flows strong once more.

In this future, our awa run clear, our ngahere stand tall, and our tamariki grow up knowing the names of the places that hold their stories. Communities are confident and connected. Our people thrive not despite the land, but because of our care for it.

This is a future of abundance, not scarcity. Of manaaki, not fear. Of decisions made close to home by those who understand the rhythm of the seasons, the shape of the hills, and the wisdom of the past.

We do not seek to return to what was – we seek to build something enduring together. A future where our mokopuna can stand with pride and say: **"They looked after us."**

## Ngā Pou Whakahaere | Guiding Principles

**We call for action that is steeped in the values of this place, shaped by the wisdom of its people, and accountable to the generations that follow.**

### Everyday Rangatiratanga, Everyday

Recognising the uniqueness of our whenua Te Mana o Te Tairāwhiti – its culture, history, and geography – and the right of local communities to shape our own future.

### Te Tiriti o Waitangi as a Framework

Te Tiriti provides a foundation for shared responsibility, honouring relationships between tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, and te taiao. Its tikanga reminds us how to act with integrity and care.

### Ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata

When the land is well, the people are well. The health of our ecosystems is inseparable from the wellbeing of our whānau and communities.

### Ki uta ki tai

From the mountains to the sea, everything is connected. What happens to the whenua in one place affects life downstream. Our approach must be holistic and catchment-minded.

### Intergenerational Thinking

Intergenerational thinking gives us the courage to look far beyond the immediate. By planning for our mokopuna and their mokopuna, we lay foundations that honour both whakapapa and whenua.

### Local Knowledge and Evidence

We carry the solutions within us. Tairāwhiti is home to generations of knowledge that, when woven together with science, technology and innovation, can lead the way.

### Equitable Transition

Acknowledging injustices and imbalances that have shaped our landscapes and communities frees us to work together toward repair, restoration, and reconciliation.

### Trust and Accountability

Transparency, public reporting, and a clear understanding of where responsibilities lie are essential for trust.

### Wellbeing Focussed

The wellbeing of people and the whenua are inseparable. When the land thrives, so do our whānau, culture, and communities.



Scan to access the full  
background report and  
additional resources  
or go to [teweu.nz](https://www.teweu.nz)

Tairāwhiti Citizens' Assembly

supported by



funded by





# CALLS TO ACTION

These **CALLS TO ACTION** reflect the collective whakaaro of our Citizens' Assembly. They are rooted in our whenua, shaped by lived experience, grounded in our values and based on the principles that guide us.

## 1. LET US LEAD!

We call on **central government, Gisborne District Council and our community leaders** to deliver a future where decisions about Tairāwhiti are made by the people of Tairāwhiti.

- ▶ To strengthen the role of **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** as a living framework for partnership and shared leadership in our region.
- ▶ To uplift **Te Mana o Te Tairāwhiti** – the voices of those most connected to the whenua, tangata whenua, hapū, and our communities.
- ▶ To acknowledge the ongoing impacts of past decisions on **tangata whenua** and work together to restore balance and build trust.
- ▶ To implement regionally specific policies that reflect our **unique geography, values, and needs**.
- ▶ To respond meaningfully to the **MILU recommendations** with transparent, public reporting on progress.
- ▶ To show bold **climate leadership** and commit to **urgent resourcing** of climate action grounded in both evidence and lived experience.
- ▶ To embed **participatory processes** within GDC that prioritise the leadership and lived experience of rangatahi as essential to the region's direction.

## 2. LET US HEAL!

We call on **Te Whatu Ora, Trust Tairāwhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Gisborne District Council** to ensure land use decisions actively restore the wellbeing of our people by restoring our relationship with the whenua.

- ▶ To **acknowledge the lasting harm** caused by land use decisions that disregard our environment and community wellbeing – especially for tangata whenua.
- ▶ To **invest in holistic mental health and wellbeing support** grounded in the values and realities of Tairāwhiti communities.
- ▶ To **localise wellbeing frameworks** like **Te Whare Tapa Whā**, placing whenua at the centre of oranga.
- ▶ To support open, inclusive **hui across the rohe** that reconnect people with place, purpose, and each other.
- ▶ To create meaningful pathways for **rangatahi to lead and be heard**, shaping solutions that reflect their hopes and experiences.
- ▶ To strengthen community readiness for **climate-related events** – not only with infrastructure but with connection, knowledge, and care.
- ▶ To resource whānau and hāpori initiatives that nurture **social cohesion, cultural identity, and intergenerational wellbeing**.

## 3. LET US REGENERATE!

We call on **central government, Gisborne District Council, Trust Tairāwhiti, and the Tairāwhiti TAG (Technical Advisory Group)** to invest in long-term, locally led transitions that regenerate our most vulnerable lands and restore the mauri of our ecosystems.

- ▶ To prioritise **environmental restoration before commercial return**, placing the health of the land and waterways at the centre of all decisions.
- ▶ To identify and protect **vulnerable headwaters, riparian zones** and erosion-prone landscapes as ecological taonga.
- ▶ To support **succession planting** and layered forest systems using native species where possible, restoring balance and biodiversity.
- ▶ To reform carbon and biodiversity markets to **incentivise native reversion** and remove barriers that prevent access to nature-based income streams.
- ▶ To address the risks and liabilities of the current ETS system, which continues to favour pine over long-term ecological outcomes.
- ▶ To unlock nature-based finance – including **green bonds, ecosystem service payments, and biodiversity credits** – so that regeneration is resourced at scale.
- ▶ To train and grow a **local workforce for nature-based jobs**, restore catchment boards, and fund pest management as core regional infrastructure.

## 4. LET US DECIDE!

We call on **land-based industries, central government, and the Gisborne District Council** to support a future in which decisions about land use in Tairāwhiti are led by those who live with the impacts.

- ▶ To uphold the **right of communities** to define how industries operate in our region with practices that restore, not deplete, the whenua.
- ▶ To **resist national standards** that ignore local realities and undermine our region's ability to protect fragile landscapes, waterways, and communities.
- ▶ To ban **clear-fell forestry** on erosion-prone land and **prevent intensive land practices** that accelerate degradation.
- ▶ To support the shift toward **continuous cover forestry, regenerative farming, and selective harvesting** grounded in ecological care and place-based knowledge.
- ▶ To strengthen **GDC's capacity and commitment to monitoring and enforcement**, ensuring all land-based industries are accountable to local expectations and environmental limits.
- ▶ To require companies across sectors to engage in **meaningful partnerships with affected communities**, recognising that every action on the land is felt by the people who live with it.

## 5. LET US SHAPE THE FUTURE!

We call on **central government, Gisborne District Council, Trust Tairāwhiti, and research funders** to support Tairāwhiti in leading bold, place-based innovation – combining mātauranga Māori, science, and technology to build a thriving future for our people and our whenua.

- ▶ To fund large-scale **landscape regeneration** rooted in indigenous knowledge – including locally-led catchment scale pilots.
- ▶ To support long-term, precision **monitoring of our freshwater, coastal, and regenerating ecosystems** and to ensure the data is transparent, accessible, and valuable for local decision-making.
- ▶ To back research that reflects the **specific realities and opportunities of Tairāwhiti**, not just generalised national frameworks.
- ▶ To evolve a **decarbonised, nature-enhancing economy** grounded in the potential of the **indigenous bioeconomy**, sustainable enterprise, and ecosystem services.
- ▶ To support the **development of local talent and workforce pathways**, connecting rangatahi and workers to meaningful, nature-positive careers.
- ▶ To invest in **new tools and technologies** that reduce emissions, enhance efficiency, and enable land-use decisions that are smarter, fairer, and future-proof.
- ▶ To demonstrate that wise investment in land-use transformation today will deliver long-term benefits – locally, regionally, and nationally.

## He Wero | The Challenge

We now lay this challenge before you – to hold, to honour, and to act upon.

To those we have called upon, Gisborne District Council, central government, Te Whatu Ora, Trust Tairāwhiti, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Tairāwhiti TAG, land-based industries, research funders, and all those with the power to shape land use in our region, this is your challenge.

This is not a report to be shelved. It is a voice from a community of people who live with the impacts of land-use decisions and who hold a vision for a better future.

We ask you to respond with urgency, transparency, and courage.

### WHAT WE ARE ASKING OF YOU NOW:

- ▶ **Publicly respond to these CALLS TO ACTION within 60 days of receiving them.**
- ▶ **Provide a statement of intent to acknowledge, engage with, and act on the CALLS TO ACTION.**
- ▶ **Commit to ongoing dialogue with the Tairāwhiti community – including participatory opportunities for hapū, rangatahi, and local groups.**
- ▶ **Set out clear next steps outlining how your role or agency will support the transformation this assembly is calling for.**

This is your moment to lead, not in isolation, but in partnership with the citizens of Tairāwhiti. The time to walk forward together is now.