



TE KĀHUI RARAUNGA

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World-first data storage infrastructure solution built by Iwi Māori, for Iwi Māori

Te Kāhui Raraunga Charitable Trust (TKR) is on a mission to provide a data storage solution like no other in the pursuit of mana motuhake when it comes to data and the digital future. The concept of the network's purpose is encapsulated in its name, Te Pā Tūwatawata.

And after six months of testing, the pilot phase has proven so successful, TKR expects Te Pā Tūwatawata to go live in early 2025.

The kaupapa involves the development of a distributed storage network to enable iwi, hapū and whānau Māori to collect, store, protect, access and control their own data.

Unlike other data storage solutions here and around the world, the servers used to connect the network will be based at the heart of where the data comes from – on marae, inside Māori organisations, or at other relevant iwi locations.

Three locations have been in the testing phase since late 2023, with the final network set to open with eight locations around the motu.

TKR Chairman, Rāhui Papa says the project is not only a world-first, but significantly embraces core concepts like kotahitanga – through sharing and scaling; and rangatiratanga – by giving iwi and hapū the power to control and make decisions over their own data.

“Iwi Māori Data sovereignty is at the heart of everything we do at TKR. As the world becomes more and more digital, we must adapt and be prepared to create our own infrastructure and empower our people with the know-how and skills to use it,” says Mr Papa.

Kirikowhai Mikaere, Lead Technician for the Data ILG and Te Kāhui Raraunga says traditionally, data centres are located in big warehouses, completely isolated from the source of the data and the people and whenua who have connection to it.

“With this kaupapa, we’re housing the data where it belongs, under the safe protection of the people that it means the most to. Additionally, with Te Pā Tūwatawata being located on-shore and owned by us, it meets the principles of Iwi Māori Data Sovereignty at the highest levels,” says Ms Mikaere.

Te Pā Tūwatawata also includes investing in its own skill base to build capability amongst iwi to manage and maintain the sites, and the data held within them.

“We have some of the best global network designers and experts working on Te Pā Tūwatawata. It is critical that we build capability to form our own workforce and contribute to a more highly-skilled New Zealand-wide workforce overall.

“We already have two rangatahi on board as the first Te Pā Tūwatawata junior network engineers, working alongside our local and global specialists to help lead this mahi into the future.”



He kura ka huna, he kura ka whākina, e koropupū ana te Wai Ora!

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Erena Mikaere, Principal Advisor (Digital) at TKR, has spearheaded and guided the project since its inception and is proud of the progress that has been made as the team head towards a 2025 launch.

“We are disrupting the status quo when it comes to digital and data, so that they better serve Iwi Māori aspirations of rangatiratanga and mana motuhake.

“Our data storage network Te Pā Tūwatawata has layers of safety, security, functionality and protection structurally informed by kawa and tikanga; that means hapū and iwi can make their own calls about the access and sharing of their own information in ways that honour their kawa and tikanga at place.

“There are some powerful motivations for this mahi. Our economic, social, cultural and environmental future will be underpinned by a digital future – and data infrastructure sits at the foundation of this.

“Te Pā Tūwatawata provides Iwi Māori an opportunity to build a new digital and data world. It has been created by us, for us, with te ao Māori values at its core, and its working! It’s hugely exciting.

“As we head deeper into this digital age, it excites me to know we’re not just moving with the times but we are leading as a people, while continuing to hold onto the wisdom of our ancestors from a past which teaches us to safeguard our own stories and taonga.

“I’m really looking forward to sharing Te Pā Tūwatawata with the rest of Aotearoa and seeing the benefits it will bring to not just the Māori economy, but for New Zealand’s economy, showing Aotearoa and the world, what Iwi Māori can achieve.”

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