



**Te Puni Kōkiri**  
REALISING MĀORI POTENTIAL

## Māori in Australia

### *Ngā Māori i te Ao Moemoeā*



#### INTRODUCTION:

**Te Puni Kōkiri's report titled *Māori in Australia – Ngā Māori i te Ao Moemoeā* gives people the most accurate picture yet of just how many Māori there are in Australia, why they went there, and how they are faring.**

It also highlights the fact that while Māori are living and working in another country, they still consider themselves to be Māori and most are still calling New Zealand 'home'.

#### BACKGROUND:

*Māori in Australia – Ngā Māori i te Ao Moemoeā* is written by Te Puni Kōkiri Policy Manager Paul Hamer and based on research undertaken while a visiting fellow in the Department of Politics and Public Policy at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, in 2006. Part of his research included a 50-question survey being filled in either online or in hard-copy by 1205 Māori across Australia. The views of another 400 Māori are included from research fieldwork carried out around the country.

The resulting 230-page report is divided into 20 chapters. Topics include the history of Māori contact with Australia; the reasons Māori move across the Tasman; the jobs they have been drawn to; their integration into the Australian state through, for example, their take-up of citizenship; their attempts to build community infrastructure and maintain the practice of their culture; their sense of being different from Māori in New Zealand; and the challenges that go with being Māori overseas.

#### HISTORICAL CONTACT:

The Māori encounter with Australia has occurred through two major periods of discovery and contact. The first was the period following the earliest days of the establishment of a penal colony in New South Wales, when many Māori were drawn to Sydney to trade in goods, acquire new technologies and be exposed to new ideas. More recently, after urbanisation in New Zealand and in an age of increasingly easy access to the world, Māori sought out the 'bright lights' and working opportunities of Sydney and beyond.



Waitangi Day celebration at Merrylands, Sydney.

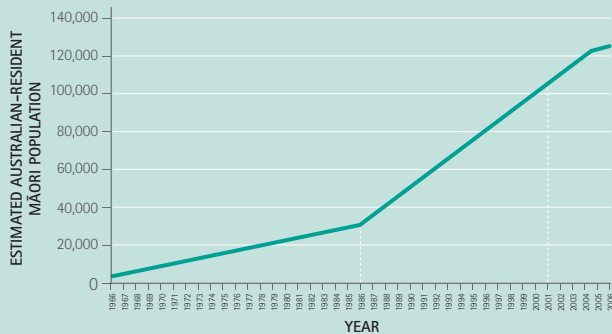
#### POPULATION:

This report was printed just before the results of the 2006 Australian census became known. The census revealed 92,912 people stated Māori ancestry amongst their first two ancestry responses, a 27.4 percent increase over 2001. However, this increase needs to be placed in context, as in the 2001 census respondents were not advised that only their first two ancestry responses would be counted. In 2006 they were instructed to name a maximum of two ancestries. We therefore believe most people would have prioritised their answers accordingly, and this may have impacted upon the result.

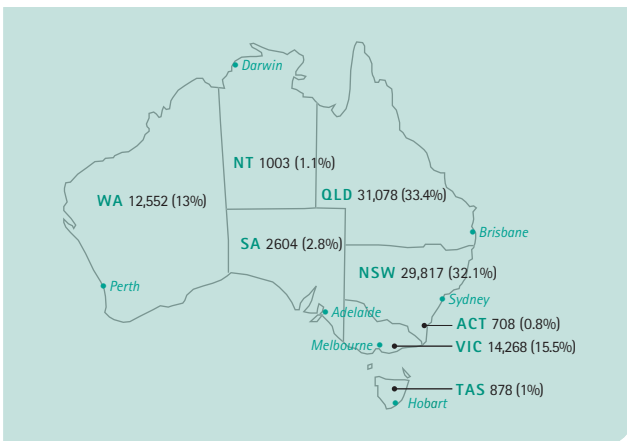
Research undertaken for this report also suggests that the 2006 census understates the Māori population in Australia. Of the 1205 survey respondents, no fewer than 169 individuals (14 percent) stated that despite their strong sense of Māori identity, they would not enter 'Māori' at the census ancestry question, preferring to enter descriptors like 'New Zealander' or 'Australian' instead.



**ESTIMATED AUSTRALIAN-RESIDENT MĀORI POPULATION, 1966–2006**



However, a rapid rise in the size of the Māori population in Australia can be seen in the results of the last three censuses that have asked an ancestry question: in 1986 some 26,035 identified themselves as Māori, by 2001 this had climbed to 72,956, and by 2006 it had reached 92,912. A large majority of these Māori were born in New Zealand. Meanwhile, two-thirds of the Australian-born Māori in 2001 were aged under 15.



Queensland now has the largest number of Māori, surpassing New South Wales for the first time since accurate records began. This mirrors the overall preference of New Zealanders generally, when emigrating to Australia, with Queensland being their preferred destination.

**REASONS FOR MOVING TO AUSTRALIA:**

Māori migration to Australia largely follows the pattern of overall New Zealand migration. A majority of survey respondents said they had come to Australia 'for a better chance to get work or better job(s)'. Most people also said they had come 'for a new start in life'.

Overall, the more specific reasons given by survey respondents and interviewees for their move could be classified by either 'pull factors', such as better weather, higher wages, and joining whānau already in Australia; and 'push factors' – negative experiences in New Zealand arising from social dysfunction and perceived prejudice.

**EMPLOYMENT:**

Nearly 87 percent of survey respondents said their employment had become 'much' or 'a bit' better since moving to Australia. Many argued that Māori in Australia have a reputation for hard work. High-profile occupations pursued by Māori in Australia include entertainment, shearing, mining, construction and security. Census results also show large concentrations of Māori workers in trades, clerical, machine operating roles, and labouring.

The stereotype in Australia of New Zealanders sunning themselves on Bondi Beach or the Gold Coast while collecting the dole is also fading. The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) reports that the labour force participation rate of New Zealand citizens in Australia at 30 June 2006 was high at 76.7 percent, compared to only 68.6 percent for Australian-born. The June 2006 unemployment rate for New Zealand citizens in Australia was lower than that for Australian-born (3.5 percent compared with 4.7 percent). The inverse of the 'dole-bludger' stereotype, that New Zealanders come to Australia to take jobs off Australian workers, is one that some Māori said they had encountered.

**POLITICAL INTEGRATION:**

Māori have a very low rate of take-up of Australian citizenship – in 2001 it was only 22.8 percent. Just under half of the survey respondents who had not become citizens said they wished to remain a citizen of New Zealand only. As a result, most Māori in Australia cannot vote, and many continue to look to the New Zealand Government or iwi organisations for support, including for funding and services.

**SHOW THE REASONS WHY HAVE YOU NOT BECOME AN AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN**

Response	%
Don't qualify – haven't lived here long enough	10.4
There's no need to do that	29.7
Just haven't got round to it	35.1
It is too expensive	6.7
I want to go on being a citizen of New Zealand only	48.3
Other	5.2
Don't know	3.0

The Australian Government spends tens of millions of dollars per year helping settle ethnic migrants in Australia, and all the state governments have multicultural funding bodies. However, Māori appear not to view themselves as immigrants in Australia (especially ethnic migrants like the Vietnamese, Greeks and others). In addition, survey results suggested many Māori were not aware that they may be eligible for Australian government grants.

**MĀORI IN AUSTRALIA FIT MUCH MORE EASILY INTO MAINSTREAM AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY THAN IMMIGRANTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

Response	%
Strongly agree	33.0
Agree	43.4
Neither agree nor disagree	16.7
Disagree	2.6
Strongly disagree	0.9
Don't know/no opinion	3.4

**RETENTION OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY COHESION:**

The report noted a fascination many Australians have with Māori culture. Indeed, Māori cultural performances in Australia play an important role in promoting New Zealand.

Key issues for Māori in Australia include the small number of kaumātua; the cultural challenges of holding tangihanga in the absence of marae or other communally-owned buildings; and the loss of much traditional knowledge. Attempts to come together to achieve culturally-oriented community goals have often come unstuck because of the inherent obstacles to pan-tribal and local community-based representation and governance. In New Zealand the predominantly whakapapa-based nature of community effort adds a discipline and structure that is usually missing in Australia.

Many Māori in Australia commented that they missed their extended family structure. As a result, some said they had taken on new notions of 'whānau'. Over 60 percent of respondents defined whānau as including 'family and relatives plus other Māori you live and/or work and/or socialise with in Australia'. Interestingly a further 52 respondents ticked 'other' and broadened their concept of whānau beyond even Māori. There was evidence that Māori are bonding with Pākehā and other New Zealanders very well in Australia, which shows the strength of New Zealanders' national identity overseas.

**TE REO MĀORI:**

The revival of the Māori language in New Zealand over the last 20 years has only indirectly benefited Māori in Australia. A range of formal opportunities exist for learning te reo in Australia, from pre-school to adults, but skilled teachers are scarce and there are other impediments to successful learning.

While many Māori in Australia feel the need to learn te reo more than they ever did in New Zealand, interviews and census results suggest that use and knowledge of te reo Māori in Australia has been steadily declining. However, one cause for optimism is that there are many Māori in Australia who want to learn.

**DO YOU THINK YOU WILL (CONTINUE TO) LEARN THE MĀORI LANGUAGE / TE REO IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?**

Response	%
Definitely	30.9
Probably	20.1
Don't know	7.3
Probably not	37.3
Definitely not	4.4

**PARTICIPATION IN SPORT:**

It has long been contended that sport has an important aspect of Māori cultural identity in Australia. Regardless of whether it is at formal, established tournaments like Taki Toa or the new wave of touch tournaments, and the like, there is no doubt that Māori enjoy coming together at sporting competitions.

Survey results suggested that Māori prefer to play sport alongside other Māori – one survey question found that of the 449 who answered, a clear majority reported that half or more of their team was Māori.

Many respondents also commented on the sporting opportunities that exist for their children in Australia. Given the fact that many Australian-born Māori seek to represent New Zealand, whether the realisation of the potential of these children is ultimately to New Zealand's or Australia's advantage, remains to be seen.



Pōi Turaki rugby player Taki Toa Shield in Sydney.





## COMPARE MĀORI HERE IN AUSTRALIA WITH MĀORI IN NEW ZEALAND

Compared to Māori in New Zealand	Much more than Māori in NZ	More than Māori in NZ	About the same	Less than Māori in NZ	Much less than Māori in NZ	Don't know / no opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
how much importance do Māori in Australia give to iwi (tribal) politics?	3.0	3.3	22.5	28.2	20.6	22.4
how motivated are Māori in Australia to get ahead?	35.2	35.7	19.9	1.7	0.8	6.7
how Māori-community-focused are Māori in Australia?	6.8	13.1	32.8	26.4	9.3	11.6
how much do Māori in Australia feel the need to connect with their Māori cultural heritage?	22.9	22.8	28.2	13.7	4.3	8.1

### DIFFERENCES:

Over 70 percent of survey respondents said they believe Māori in Australia are more motivated to get ahead than Māori in New Zealand. With that comes a perception on the part of many respondents that Māori in New Zealand also see them as 'plastic', 'rich' or 'deserters'.

Many also believe that the environment in Australia is more conducive to success, being relatively free of negative stereotyping of Māori; of obligations to whānau; and of the limiting expectations either they, or others, had of themselves, that stopped them striving for success.

On the other hand, many see downsides to life in Australia, such as cultural dislocation; identity problems among the Australian-born; and a lack of government understanding of Māori cultural requirements.

### RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND:

A high proportion of Māori indicated that they will return to New Zealand, or at least, intended to return. Māori in Australia – despite it being a country to which New Zealanders tend to migrate permanently – are much more set on returning to New Zealand than predominantly professional Pākehā New Zealanders spread throughout the world (as revealed by the 2006 Kea survey). In other words, Māori overseas appear to feel the pull of home stronger than other New Zealanders. This is obviously because of the dimension of being indigenous: of having Māori land interests, of having the cultural inheritance of a language and culture found only in New Zealand, and of having both New Zealand-specific cultural connections to place and kinship connections to iwi (as well as, for that matter, social obligations to whānau).

### CONCLUSIONS:

Māori have become a transnational people and Māori development should no longer be seen solely in terms of the New Zealand nation state. This suggests that a policy of engagement with Māori in Australia, through the moderate extension of cultural benefits and support to them, could potentially reap an ongoing economic benefit to Māori in New Zealand, much in the same way that governments around the world routinely try to connect with their citizens abroad in order to leverage off their success.

Initiatives like the marae at Auckland Airport, and the array of online sources of news, knowledge and information show that engagement with and support for Māori overseas, has been happening for some time. Opportunities exist to further the links between Māori on both sides of the Tasman and increase the contributions Māori in Australia make to Māori development in New Zealand.

## DO YOU THINK THAT YOU WILL LIVE IN NEW ZEALAND (AGAIN) SOME DAY?

Category	%
Definitely	36.0
Probably	26.2
Don't know	14.3
Probably not	19.6
Definitely not	3.7

**DISCLAIMER** The information contained in this publication is for general information only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, because the information is generalised, its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Readers are advised to seek independent advice on particular matters and not rely on this publication. No liability is assumed by Te Puni Kōkiri for any losses suffered directly or indirectly by any person relying on the information contained in this publication.

© Te Puni Kōkiri 2007  
 REF: 0106-003  
 September 2007