

20 August 2025

Manukau Urban Māori Authority Board
5-7 Shirley Road
Papatoetoe
Auckland 2025

Attention: Martin Cooper, Frances Smiler-Edwards, Dr. Pauline Kingi, Rangi McLean, Ella Henry, Jerome Mika, Kiri Skipworth, Tania Rangiheuea

Kia ora Whānau,

Serious Bullying Covered Up At MUMA

Without Prejudice

1. Introduction

1.1 I raise serious matters that need your urgent attention. This document outlines instances of abuse and bullying against employees that have gone unaddressed by MUMA's CEO and the board for several months. My wish is we resolve the matters fairly so we can move on.

1.2 Earlier attempts to resolve matters have been resisted. I should have made this a priority a while back, but I have other work that takes up my time. However, the situation has become untenable in recent weeks and can no longer be put off.

1.3 After being trespassed recently by Willie Jackson, I wrote to Mike Tukaki, MUMA's deputy chief executive, and Willie, last Thursday. I requested a confidential hui to at least discuss the matters below, to see if we could find a pathway towards resolving matters. I said if the request was ignored, I would have no choice but to write to the Board. Unfortunately, it was ignored, so I am writing to you.

2. Background

- 2.1 The background to this dispute is that earlier this year a written report was presented to the CEO, Tania Rangiheuea, by two senior managers, outlining allegations of bullying and misconduct against her. When those concerns were raised with the Board Chair, Mike Hinton, he was told by Willie that if he didn't assist in covering up the allegations, he would be removed as Chair. Days later, he was indeed removed from the Board.
- 2.2 The contents of this letter are as serious as any matter that comes before a board. I have collated the relevant matters into a simple format outlining the problems and a process to hopefully resolve them.
- 2.3 In addition, over the past few months I have been requested to assist several employees at MUMA with personal grievances that raised specific allegations against the CEO. I have reached out to Tania, Mike, and Willie, hoping to resolve them informally. This has been unsuccessful for various reasons.
- 2.4 A previous advocate for the three personal grievances addressed in this letter wrote to the MUMA board six weeks ago. Although the Chair and Secretary received his letter and he was promised a response, he did not hear back. The cases have reverted back to me.
- 2.5 It is unfortunate that I have since been maligned and smeared and my motives questioned. Ironically, this tactic is a form of bullying in itself. But it is a distraction. It's not about me. It's about the treatment of kaimahi at MUMA. We need to resolve these matters fairly.
- 2.6 I was stunned when Willie inserted himself to cover up serious allegations against his wife. He has put MUMA and himself at serious risk. Kaimahi at MUMA are being mistreated daily even now. Tania's conduct can no longer be minimalised or rationalised.
- 2.7 Tania is a talent and has great abilities. But she also has equally great blind spots. Her lack of self-awareness in people engagement and her casual vindictiveness at times is deeply unsettling. She is also very kind at times. But she builds resentment in the workforce by making arbitrary decisions and humiliating employees for imagined wrongdoings.
- 2.8 The CEO also takes no responsibility for, or even acknowledges, major management failure. For example, the failure to register for Pay Equity cost MUMA millions. This basic oversight cost ordinary employees thousands of

dollars a year in lower salaries. Yet no acknowledgement has ever been made by the CEO, or the Board, let alone an apology issued. Meanwhile, some in senior management have received significant salaries, whilst many hardworking and loyal kaimahi have received little increase, or in some cases, no increase at all, for years.

2.9 When I left MUMA's employment earlier this year I was happy to move on with goodwill. I never initiated contact with anyone, although I got the occasional request to be a job reference. Up until the last month I ignored requests to be drawn into MUMA issues.

2.10 Although I did raise the legitimate grievances listed in this letter, I tried to resolve them informally, without success. I was also approached by two other employees wanting me to raise a grievance. I forwarded them to someone else.

2.11 However, requests from employees have escalated in recent weeks. I have had six requests to be a job reference in the last month, and two just in this week. That's not normal.

2.12 Factors include unfair and non-transparent pay scales, arbitrary setting of salaries, favouritism, low morale, and erratic issuing of warnings without any process or representation. The common denominator is fear.

2.13 I have enormous respect for the individual members on the board, new and old. I have known most of you for many years. You are leaders committed to social justice and doing what is right. I include Willie and Tania in that. We all make mistakes. But I can't, and nor should you, look away when we see injustices and bad behaviour. I am not doing this to punish anyone. I am in it to restore the damage that has been done to those who have been mistreated.

2.14 My hope is we don't go down a pathway of hostilities, as we are poised to do. It will not end well for any of us. We are all supporters of MUMA, so we have a responsibility to resolve our dispute amicably. If you as board members abdicate your responsibilities and choose not to enter into a process of resolution, then I want to know I at least tried my best to avoid the otherwise inevitable conflict.

2.15 The specific matters we need to resolve are below.

3. First Grievance

- 3.1 Late last year a Team Lead was told by Tania to apply for her team's vacant manager position, and Tania promised to support her. The interview panel, unaware of this discussion, recommended the Team Lead to the CEO anyway, as she was clearly the strongest candidate.
- 3.2 Another seemingly less qualified employee inquired about the role after the interview process was completed. I informed that person that she, as an existing employee in good standing, would be interviewed if she wished. But I told her the shortlisted applicants were very strong and had the formal qualifications requested in the advertisement, which she did not possess. This person said she would talk to Tania and consequently did not submit an application. The day after the panel delivered its recommendation to Tania, she put the appointment on hold, even though earlier she had directed priority to be given to this appointment.
- 3.3 During the following 10 weeks the Team Lead felt humiliated, as she and her colleagues were advised that she was the preferred candidate, and she was constantly asked for updates from her peers. However, Tania made no contact with her. The Team Lead felt her mana had been destroyed and tendered her resignation in the hope that the CEO would reach out. Instead, the person who did not apply for the role, was summarily appointed with no process. This action has undermined employee confidence in MUMA's leadership and exposed the bad faith decision-making process to everyone. This has created ongoing problems with the team.
- 3.4 There is also an outstanding matter of a significant wage underpayment for the Team Lead that was not resolved earlier because she had been persuaded any increase in the new role would ameliorate any claim.
- 3.5 This matter must be resolved.

4. Second Grievance

- 4.1 Shortly after my MUMA departure I received a phone call from [REDACTED] then [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was very distressed saying he was considering resigning because of the bullying behaviour of the CEO against [REDACTED]. He asked me to represent [REDACTED] in a grievance.

4.2 [REDACTED] had accepted a fixed term contract offer by [REDACTED] on an agreed salary to assist him in a MUMA review. The following day the CEO called [REDACTED] into a meeting and bullied [REDACTED] into reducing the salary offer by \$9,000. To keep [REDACTED] job and under duress, [REDACTED] signed the reduced salary whilst the CEO stood over [REDACTED].

4.3 If this behaviour wasn't outrageous enough [REDACTED] was called by Tania to a second meeting without witnesses to be angrily abused. [REDACTED] was incredulously blamed for [REDACTED] threatening to resign. This was ridiculous. There were further petty retaliatory actions after this meeting. [REDACTED] was traumatised and resigned shortly afterwards.

4.4 This matter must be resolved.

5. Third Grievance

5.1 The CEO recently ambushed another Team Lead whilst this person was in a meeting with her direct manager finalising her annual review. Tania harangued the Team Lead in this meeting over an unrelated matter which was not true. Tania reduced the Team Lead to tears.

5.2 Later, the Team Lead was advised by her manager that she had to speak to the CEO about his pay increase recommendation. Tania refused to consider it and referred the Team Lead back to her manager. No action on the recommended pay rise has been undertaken since.

5.3 The Team Lead was distraught by this behaviour and raised a personal grievance. Instead of resolving the matter, a retaliatory complaint by management was laid that is dubious at best. The Team Lead has since been under formal investigation and on medical leave. Her mental health and well-being is shot. Currently, the Team Lead is being managed out of her employment. This is beyond disgraceful.

5.4 This matter must be resolved.

6. Other Grievances

6.1 Three other allegations of Tania's bullying have been raised with me. I did not agree to take on these cases as I wanted to pursue a more inclusive strategy to fix the broader problems. I referred them to another advocate.

Two of these complainants consequently resigned. I suspect the remaining employee won't last. I'm advised there are other potential cases.

7. Cover Up of Allegations by Sacking MUMA's Chair

7.1 This is the most concerning matter for board members. Mike Hinton, the former MUMA Chair, has asked me to assist in finding a resolution to the actions abruptly removing him from his role of Chair and from membership of the board.

7.2 His removal was after he received serious complaints from three senior managers of systemic bullying by the CEO. It is unbelievable Willie used his leadership standing to enter into a conspiracy to persuade other board members to remove Mike, to block an investigation into the complaints against his wife.

7.3 I have read the former Chair's legal file. His lawyers have prepared a strong case against MUMA and Willie. The former Chair and his lawyers believe board members and Willie acted improperly on a number of levels. He has asked me to assist to resolve this matter informally, rather than have a public spectacle that will almost certainly cause serious damage to MUMA and the various individuals involved.

8. The Events Leading up to the Chair's Sacking

8.1 A few weeks after I had left MUMA, Deborah Mahuta-Coyle, a senior strategic advisor alongside Mike Tukaki, called me out of the blue. She raised serious concerns and requested my advice. Deborah said Mike and her had been conducting a MUMA review. They had interviewed various managers and employees and were alarmed at the feedback. Deborah volunteered that Tania was a terminal threat to MUMA. She said Mike and her believed MUMA would not survive if Tania stayed as CEO, and both of them were going to resign if Tania stayed. I was taken aback and advised they had a responsibility to take their concerns to the Chair.

8.2 Deborah told me Mike and her had prepared a written report outlining their concerns and the steps that needed to be taken. This report was not passed to the Chair.

- 8.3 The Chair called me after he had spoken to Deborah and Mike. He said Matthew Tukaki, manager of Radio Waatea, had also called him. The Chair was deeply concerned at what he was told. He said all three told him they would resign if Tania stayed. It is revealing that these senior managers were all direct appointments by Willie. I advised the Chair to seek legal advice as Tania was an employee.
- 8.4 I understand the Chair raised concerns with the Board. Dr. Pauline Kingi, a senior board member, and the Chair then met with Tania. After that meeting Willie contacted the Chair claiming to be the CEO's employment representative and demanded a one-on-one meeting. At the meeting Willie insisted the Chair close any investigation down and apologise verbally and in writing to the CEO and the Board. When the Chair did not engage, Willie threatened him, saying he would have him removed.
- 8.5 I understand Willie then contacted individual board members and arranged a conference call of the Board, even though he is not a board member. The Board then removed the Chair from his position without providing him a process to address their reasons for his arbitrary removal. His phone and email access were immediately disconnected even though he was still a board member.
- 8.6 Another meeting was called shortly afterwards without him, and he was removed from the Board completely. He has received no responses to his requests for an explanation. None of this behaviour is ethically or legally acceptable from any functional board. These actions put MUMA and individual board members at significant risk.
- 8.7 After the Chair's removal I received a call from Deborah, who was very distraught about his removal. She said she was going to resign, go to the media and to the Labour Party leader about Willie's conduct. I advised her against that. She then agreed to talk with Willie.
- 8.8 Later, Willie phoned me to humorously confirm he had organised the removal of the Chair, and arranged to have Mike and Deborah withdraw their allegations and apologise to Tania. The matter was now closed. They were instructed not to speak to anyone on this matter. Willie then asked me not to take any cases from bullying victims or get involved in any union activity. I told him I had no plans to do so, which was true. I am still a very reluctant player, for good reason.

8.9 I understand these three managers subsequently received promotions and/or salary rises. I don't know what happened to the report.

8.10 In reading Mike Hinton's legal brief, Willie and board members have put themselves at risk by breaching their fiduciary duties and other obligations. The removal of the Chair to cover up bullying and misconduct by the CEO at the direction of a member of parliament may not be survivable politically. I don't think any of us want to go down that path.

8.11 But the hurt and humiliation suffered by the former Chair, caused by the actions of board members, has seriously damaged his reputation and mana. The Board must restore it.

9. The Trespass Order

9.1 A member of parliament issuing me a trespass order supposedly on behalf of the Waatea Marae can't go unchallenged. Waatea is a landlord, not the employer. The law is clear on workplace access. There is a dark irony that Willie, as a current Labour MP, and as a former trade union leader from a proud union family, now acts as the worst sort of boss to cover up bullying and abuse against vulnerable workers.

9.2 The Employment Relations Act 2000 permits any union of the workers' choice to visit and engage with them in their workplace. No employer, and certainly not their landlords, get to override the law.

9.3 The pretext for the trespass order is that I had breached tikanga and disrespected the marae on several occasions. This is provably false. I had not visited the marae for months. On the day Willie emailed me the trespass order, I had indeed attended an employment meeting on the marae, at the invitation of MUMA. The meeting was professional and ended amicably.

9.4 What seems to have triggered the trespass was I had tabled a notice of initiation for bargaining of a collective agreement at this meeting. This initiative was requested by MUMA employees who wanted something done about unfair labour practices. I have no doubt this trespass action was to prevent exposure of any misconduct at MUMA.

9.5 The only reason I have not pursued the trespass matter or advanced the bargaining initiation is I don't wish to escalate any conflict until after we have

tried to address our differences. I have advised Mike and Willie that those matters are on hold until further notice.

10. Proposal to Resolve Matters

10.1 Despite our differences, I hope we can resolve things. If we fail, future options to be considered may include:

- A demand for an independent investigation into allegations of bullying.
- A request to WorkSafe to carry out the investigation.
- A request for an independent review of the Board's and individual board member's actions of events surrounding the removal of the Chair.
- A review by the Speaker of the House on the actions of a Member of Parliament. A Green Party MP was recently dismissed by parliament for less.
- A review by relevant agencies as to whether these allegations impact on their relationships with MUMA.
- The former Chair filing his case into the District Court.
- Filing the three personal grievances under urgency into the Employment Relations Authority and add others.
- Filing an injunction against the trespass order in the Employment Relations Authority.
- Raising matters publicly.

10.2 I accept there may be allegations against me. Any attacks will be defensible. In any case I don't care, as it's not about me. It's about the kaimahi and how they have been treated. Former employees and current employees will provide examples to support their claims. I have no doubt they will be truthful and impactful.

10.3 After discussion with the former Chair and the other claimants, I propose we meet and try to reach a full and final confidential settlement on all the matters between us.

10.4 It may be helpful to have MUMA board attendees in any reconciliation who have not been involved in the matters raised. My assessment of Ella Henry and Jerome Mika is that because they are new to the board, they have the emotional distance and the appropriate discernment to find a pathway through this challenge. They are both people of integrity and I believe they would be crucial to help reach a fair solution that preserves everyone's mana.

10.5 The topics for discussion are:

- The three personal grievances need to be settled fairly.
- Mike Hinton needs resolution, and his mana restored. We are lucky he has no wish to harm MUMA in spite of his mistreatment.
- The union's role. I'm happy to consider alternatives as long as any outcome ensures employees are treated fairly.
- Kaimahi treatment. There must be a way of dealing with Tania's management style going forward. I'm not making this a bottom line. But it's going to make MUMA less than it can be, if it is not resolved.

I hope you don't collectively react badly to this proposal. Out of respect to everyone involved, I decided to explain the full picture as I see it. I acknowledge there may be other matters I'm not aware of. But this gives you my perspective for you to absorb and consider in the hope we can sit down for a good faith discussion on how we may reach an amicable resolution.

I would appreciate you acknowledging receipt of this letter by close of business tomorrow. In addition, I would welcome your willingness to support an initiative for the parties to meet sometime next week, to discuss a possible pathway forward.

I look forward to hearing back.

Ngā mihi,



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