

# Tamatera iwi support Tizard Bill



**Modern-day descendants of Waihi's original tangatawhenua have affirmed their support for the Coromandel-Hauraki (Prohibition on Mining) Bill.**

The 1995 Bill, due to be presented to Parliament again on June 14 was discussed by the Ngati Tamatera on May 18 with the iwi assembly having met with representatives from Ohinemuri Earthwatch, Coromandel Watchdog, and Panmure MP Judith Tizard.

Earlier in the year the Tamatera people had met with mining industry representatives and inspected both the Waitekauri [Golden Cross] and Waihi [Martha] mines.

Following considerable debate among the kaumaatua and collected members of the runanga [assembly], members present at the meeting passed a resolution that Ngati Tamatera fully supports Judith Tizard's Bill.

It was stressed to Tamatera that the Bill will not affect the Wai 100 raupatu [land] claims and other family claims before the Waitangi Tribunal. It was pointed out that individual iwi members may have their own view and may not have all the information but, as always, they are encouraged to bring their concerns to the debating floor of the iwi hui.

Te Runanga iwi a Tamatera chairman, Hamilton resident Robert Gage, explains that the Tamatera's tribal homeland covers the majority of the Waihi area, stretches up the Coromandel, and includes Paeroa, although there are strips of the Peninsula which fall into other tribal areas.

While the Tamatera people support the Bill they believe they cannot do anything about land already subject to mining and prospecting in the Waihi area but something can be done about these activities expanding on to more land. The iwi understands that the mining companies are buying up land around their present operations with expansion intentions.

With the May resolution now passed Mr Gage hopes that the mining industry will have the courtesy to consult the tangatawhenua before expanding its operations further into its historical tribal lands.

The tribal spokesman praised Ms Tizard for coming to

Tamatera in person to explain the proposed legislation, involving them in discussions, and hearing what they had to say about. Having heard the MP's presentation the iwi members present virtually unanimously endorsed what she had to say.

Exactly how many Tamatera descendants there are is not known at this stage although upwards of 300 are registered with the Hauraki Maori Trust Board and this number is increasing all the time. Mr Gage hopes more members of the iwi will sign up giving the assembly a greater mandate.

Although the local Maori appreciate the employment and other economic benefits mining has brought to even their own people in the Waihi area, they continue to be concerned about the way the industry disturbs mother earth and want on-going dialogue about this.

While Waihi Community Marae comes under the Ngati Tamatera umbrella, it has considerable autonomy with regards to this issue. Though the marae works in with the iwi it is free to hold its own, separate, views. Marae secretary Shirley Spurr says that the marae has been given the okay to do what it has to do with regards to mining as it is directly affected as opposed to Maori further afield. She recognises the industry is a major local employer.

