

**FOMA Business Summit Opening Address by Traci Houpapa MNZM, 9am
Thursday 3 April 2025, The Narrows Landing, 431 Airport Road, Tamahere,
Hamilton**

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga karangaranga maha o te motu, tēnei te mihi ki a koutou. Ki ngā rangatira, ki ngā kaihautū o te ao pakihi Māori, ki te hunga e whakarauika nei i raro i te kaupapa o FOMA – tēnei te mihi maioha ki a koutou katoa. Ki ngā mate, haere atu rā, moe mai rā i te rangimārie. Tātou te hunga ora e huihui nei, tēnā ano tatou katoa!

It is an honour to stand before you today to open this year's FOMA Business Summit — a Summit that stands as a beacon of our collective success, ambition, and unwavering commitment to the future of Māori enterprise and prosperity. This is more than just a gathering; this is a call to action.

A call for stronger, smarter leadership, for resilience, for innovation, and most importantly, for Māori-led partnerships and solutions that take our people forward, and Aotearoa forward.

Celebrating Māori Economic Success

The recent MBIE 'Te Ohanga Maori Report' led by BERL shows that Māori enterprise is thriving, and Ahuwhenua Maori are an important part of this success.

The Maori asset base is \$126b, a rise of 83% in 5yrs from \$68.7b. Maori contribution to Global GDP is 0.02% – we are the only Indigenous economy in the world to register on GDP records.

We are an economic force, spanning industries from primary production to tourism, energy, technology, property and finance.

Our assets continue to grow, our businesses continue to expand, and our influence in the national and global economy continues to strengthen. And our success is more than growth in numbers — it is about the prosperity of our whānau, our whenua, our people. It is about ensuring that the wealth we create today translates into lasting intergenerational success.

Helping FOMA Members Prosper and Grow

FOMA has always stood for the advancement and collaboration of Māori enterprise, providing opportunities for investment, capacity building, and business expansion. Ta Hepi Te Heuheu, Waaka Vercoe and others gained support from Maori and Iwi organisations across the Motu, calling for kotahitanga so FOMA could 'foster and promote the sound management and economic advancement of Maori Authorities'.

And for over 40years, we've done that.

Our collective strength as FOMA members is our ability to share knowledge, support one another, and leverage our collective expertise by working with government, industry and other Indigenous economies, both here in Aotearoa and across the world.

We must continue to uplift and enable our people, ensuring that Ahuwhenua and Māori enterprise, both emerging and established, are equipped to thrive in today's rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Stable and Strong Leadership

We are living in uncertain times—global markets fluctuate, industries evolve, and environmental challenges demand urgent responses. Uncertainty is not new to us. Our ancestors adapted to new lands, to colonial disruptions, and to economic shifts.

Today, as Maori lead transition and adaptation in these volatile times, we must draw on that same resilience. We must diversify our investments, strengthen our global trade relationships, and position ourselves as leaders in emerging markets.

Our future is not just about surviving volatility—it's about thriving in it. And to navigate these challenging times, FOMA provides sound, stable, visionary leadership.

As Māori business leaders, we must stand firm in our values while being agile in our strategies.

We must uphold tikanga in the boardroom, in government discussions, and in every economic forum where our voice matters. And they all matter. We are business leaders, and we are kaitiaki of our lands, our resources, and our people.

Our leadership is long term, not about short-term wins; it is about building on the foundation provided for us, to provide a legacy that will endure for generations.

Advocating for Māori to Government and Industry

Māori success is New Zealand's success.

FOMA plays a critical role in advocating for policies that empower Ahuwhenua Maori and Māori enterprise — our work in climate change, resource management, freshwater and trade agreements, work toward policies that recognise the unique value and significant contribution of Ahuwhenua Maori and Maori enterprise.

Our voices must be heard at the highest levels of decision-making, from Parliament to industry boards. We must be at the table as decision-makers shaping the economic future of Aotearoa.

Māori-Led Innovation in a Changing World

In a world marked by geopolitical tensions, economic shifts, and technological disruption, Māori must lead the way in the transition and adaptation of our Ahuwhenua and our enterprises. We have always been pioneers —navigators, inventors, and entrepreneurs.

Today, we must use our collective ingenuity to drive sustainable industry, to create value from our natural resources while supporting the environment, and to embrace digital transformation in ways that align with our cultural values and improves performance and profitability for our people and place.

Whether it is in renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, or Indigenous tech startups, Māori ingenuity and innovation has the potential to shape industries and redefine economic success.

Building a Better Aotearoa for Māori and for All

Let me say it again, Aotearoa prospers when Māori prosper. Our economic success is intertwined with the social and cultural well-being of our people.

And as I end, my mind goes to those people whose leadership has brought us here today. People like Ta Hepi, Waaka Vercoe and others. People with vision and courage to found ways to grow the wealth and prosperity of our people, people who knew that, together, we are stronger.

As we embark on this summit, let us focus on solutions. Let us challenge ourselves to think bigger, to collaborate more effectively, and to push the boundaries of what is possible.

Let's navigate the challenges and embrace the opportunities before us with confidence and determination, together as FOMA.

Me Uru Kahikatea.

Traci Houpapa MNZM JP
FOMA Chairman