

Taupō Office
37 Motutaiko Street
PO Box 528
Taupō, 3351

24 April 2025

Ref: OIAD-5068

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation received on 27 March 2025, in which you asked for:

*'Rahui - i understand a Rahui has been place on the Tongariro Crossing.
1. Please advise the 'legality' of this Rahui -
2 what Act (if any) govern who can issue -where does the demand originate from
3 who 'enforces' it
4. what are the 'penalties' for any breach.
5 is this applicable 'only' to Maori
6 this is a 'Religious' belief on part of Maori - please advise why Gov/council are upholding a religious belief for one minority of the population.(?? no prayers in schools/govt - but acceptable for karakia's?'*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Please advise the 'legality' of this Rahui.*

Businesses that operate on public conservation land are required to obtain a concession from the Department of Conservation (DOC) to undertake their activities which includes Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC) guides and transport providers. One of the conditions of these concessions is that concessionaires do not operate on the TAC when they are provided written notice from DOC that there has been a fatality in this area. This condition was introduced in consultation with TAC guides, transport providers and local iwi and is a standard condition for all operators undertaking their business on the TAC. This condition is agreed to by both parties as part of each concessionaire's contract with DOC. Most visitors to the TAC use a transport operator or guides due to limited carparking at the track start and the long length of Mangatepopo Road.

2. *What Act (if any) govern who can issue -where does the demand originate from?*

Concessions are issued under Section 170 of the Conservation Act 1987

3. *Who 'enforces' it?*

DOC works with local iwi, the community and transport operators to advise the public of any rāhui that may have been put in place for the Tongariro National Park (TNP).

4. *What are the 'penalties' for any breach.*

Penalties are not formally imposed to the public, but any breach is culturally insensitive. DOC is not preventing access to any part of TNP; however, we do ask that people respect the rāhui by avoiding the area for the short period that a rāhui is in place. Not operating on the TAC following a written notice of a fatality is, however, a legal condition within concession contracts. The potential penalty for breach of a condition of a concession is suspension or termination of that concession under Schedule 2 – Standard Terms and Conditions of their concession.

5. *Is this applicable 'only' to Maori?*

All external partners and visitors to the TNP will be advised when a rāhui is in place.

6. *This is a 'Religious' belief on part of Maori - please advise why Gov/council are upholding a religious belief for one minority of the population. (?? no prayers in schools/govt - but acceptable for karakia's?)*

Concessionaires operating their business on the TAC have agreed to the condition of pausing business operation in this location following written notice of a fatality.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Damian Coutts
Director Regional Operations
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai