

Paula Werohia's office is the jewel in the crown of the Mangatawa Papamoa Blocks Incorporation.

Iwi's multi-faceted jewel

Anne Boswell talks to the caretakers of sacred Maori land in the Bay of Plenty.

From Paula Werohia's office, the beauty and majesty of the Western Bay of Plenty sweeps as far as the eye can see.

Not only is Werohia blessed with an aesthetically pleasing view - Mount Maunganui, Papamoa Beach, and Tauranga Harbour included - but she is able to say with pride that stretching out in front of her lies the land of her iwi, and within it the diverse business investments created to provide opportunities and success for the shareholders of the Mangatawa Papamoa Blocks Incorporation (MPBI).

MPBI is a more diverse business than most.

Established in 1957 when the whanau of Nga Potiki amalgamated their lands to stop any further confiscation, the incorporation has interests in beef, kiwifruit and avocado, as well as a retirement village and industrial developments.

As executive manager and director, Werohia takes care of the day-to-day running of the business.

She has a number of managers running each facet of the business, plus staff who ensure everything runs smoothly.

Mangatawa Farm consists of 101ha of grazing land, one third of the 303ha owned by the incorporation.

John Walker has managed the farm for nine years and in the last four years has concentrated on growing 1200-1500 calves annually.

Walker, who works with an agricultural cadet, operates the farm business on a supply and demand basis.

He buys in most of the stock as four-day-old calves and takes

It's all about building the capacity of the people.

PAULA WEROHIA

them through to weaning.

"White-faced bull calves and heifer calves, and friesian bulls, are usually snapped up pretty quickly at 100-120kg," he says.

"And because we take everything off the cookies we get crossbreds too, which we keep longer because the demand for them isn't there until they get a bit of weight on them - around a couple of hundred kilos.

"When they get up to those weights people want them, because from that period until the time they reach 250-400kg is only 12 months; no one wants to carry them over for a couple of years."

However, Walker says demand differs from season to season.

"I might get someone who wants some dairy heifer replacements and rather than buy recorded animals they'll come to us," he says.

"They're all out of good cows, they're still good breeding."

After several years on the job Walker has got to know who he prefers to buy from.

"There are probably half a dozen people that I buy off," he says.

"I buy autumn calves off a couple of farms, and there are another half a dozen farms down in Whakatane I buy from in the spring - they've got good herds down there.



Mangatawa Papamoa Blocks inc director Paula Werohia.

"I try and stick to the same ones because not everyone rears calves well."

With the autumn grass taking off, Walker is finding there is a real demand for steers.

"That's usually the first thing that's gone... all I've got left now is heifers," he says.

"But if they are white-faced heifers, they are snapped up pretty quickly too."

Walker also sells a lot of cross-bred bulls, but not until they get up to a good weight of 200-250kg.

"It's strange - all these calves are from big friesian cows, but they have thrown back to a cross-breed and people don't like the colour," he says.

"They want four white feet, a

star... at the end of the day we've kept them through a bit longer, and they grow just as well as the friesians."

Sometimes Walker carries them through a little longer and sends them to Silver Fern Farms, but more often than not he has farmers willing to buy them.

"They are repeat clients over several years, so they obviously like what they are getting," he says.

A good relationship with local stock agents ensures they usually know what Mangatawa beef is available for purchase.

Cattle is fed a lot of palm kernel at certain times of the year, as the area can go through a dry period at Christmas in which the

paddocks become "like deserts".

"Down on the flats it's good, as it's tidal and swampy," Walker says.

"It does grow a lot of kikuyu but it's a lifesaver in a dry period. Our beach blocks can become like a desert some years, and that's when you've got to watch your stocking numbers. It affects whether you can get rid of animals, if the weight's just not on them."

As interest continues in growing the incorporation's industrial developments in nearby Truman Lane, the grazing lands available on Mangatawa will be affected.

Part of the 2017-18 strategy is to acquire more land, firstly through lease and then by

purchase in the longer term.

The development of 6ha of industrial land at Truman Lane has seen Tui Products and Stadium Storage take up long-term leases, and there are plans in the pipeline to develop more industrial land, both for lease and a Mangatawa-owned cool storage facility.

In addition to cattle, the incorporation has successful kiwifruit and avocado orchards.

For the last three years Steve Law has managed the Mangatawa kiwifruit orchard and has been instrumental in developing a further 9ha producing G3, taking the total orchard area to 30ha - 20ha hayward and 10ha G3.

The 2017-18 strategy for the kiwifruit orchard is to cut over a further 3ha of hayward in the front orchard and start the next stage of development of a further 3ha of G3.

"We also have 3.5ha of avocados," Werohia says.

"It's not a large orchard but we experienced the best crop ever in the 2016-17 season."

The Mangatawa investment perhaps the most surprising is the joint venture between the incorporation and the company formerly known as Retirement Assets, resulting in the development of the Pacific Coast Retirement Village in 2012.

Eight hectares of land parallel to Papamoa Beach was developed in stage one, and in 2015, after stage one sold out, it was agreed by MPBI shareholders that another 8ha would be developed for stage two.

Now, stage two is almost sold out; Werohia says demand for villas in the beachside village has exceeded all expectations.

In addition to business interests, the incorporation has also invested in social services for the



Mangakawa Papamoa raises 1200-1500 calves annually.

shareholders and beneficiaries of Mangatawa.

They have a number of one and two bedroom kaumatua units, and three and four bedroom homes for families in a community on Mangatawa that endeavours to provide a safe and supportive environment while enhancing the local marae, Tamapahore.

The incorporation also offers training and employment opportunities for its people through the farm, building infrastructure and the retirement village, as well as sports and education scholarships.

"It's all about building the capacity of the people," Werohia says.

"We have around 800 shareholders and they are all entitled to take ownership of the business



MPBI director Paula Werohia looks out over her lwl land.

and take advantage of the education and employment opportunities we can offer."

Despite always being the jewel in the crown of Mangatawa, the

offices of the incorporation have undergone many changes over the years.

In 1996 shearers' quarters were transported from Rotorua and

refurbished into offices.

Initially half the building was used for administration and the other half housed a health clinic investigating genetic illness in conjunction with Otago University.

In 2015, fire gutted the administration building of the incorporation and it was decided to build a new office that reflected the legend of Mangatawa, as well as the dynamic direction the incorporation was taking.

Mangatawa chair Kevin Hana took architect Graham Price to the top of Mangatawa hill and told him the traditional story of the three whales - Mangatawa, Kopukairoa and Hikurangi and from that visit came the design for the building.

The creation of the office was a team effort, involving builders FORM NZ, many Mangatawa staff, and local iwi and their whanau.

Paula Werohia says the building of the new office lifted the spirits of the committee, the staff and the administration personnel that work in the office daily.

"The views are magnificent. We look out over the Pacific Ocean from the Whakatane Heads up past Mount Maunganui, and our islands Tuhua and Motiti," she says.

"Our shareholders and local iwi have told us how proud they feel whenever they drive past the office and have no hesitation in telling whoever is driving with them that it's the office of the whanau-whanaunga of Tauranga Moana.

"Mangatawa, over the years, has kept a reasonably low profile, so to have an office that sits on the side of Mangatawa Maunga and overlooks 80 per cent of our lands is truly a long-awaited achievement."

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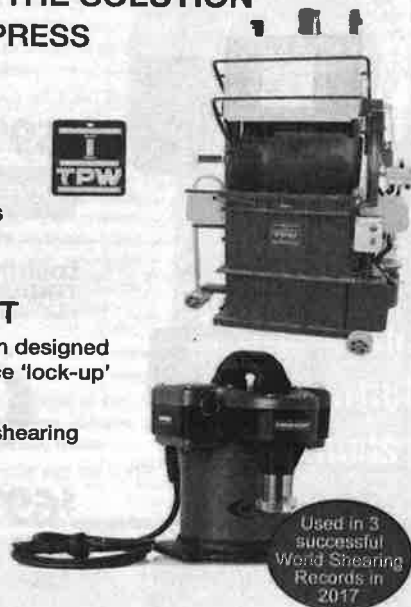
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