



Waitakere Ethnic Board

*Tui, Tui-tuia nga harenga tangata
Bringing Cultures Together*

HISTORY

The Waitakere Multicultural Society had made requests of Council through the Annual Plan submissions process for the establishment of a multicultural advisory board, along the lines of the Pacific Islands Advisory Board. Subsequently the Waitakere Indian Association made a similar submission to Council for the establishment of an Indian Advisory Board which could be expanded into an Ethnic Advisory Council. The calls for an advisory body were referred by Council to WADCOSS for consideration as part of the migrant and refugee working group being convened at the time by WADCOSS. This working group subsequently merged with the Wellbeing Collaboration Strategy migrant and refugee Call to Action Group under the banner of New Out West. As part of the New Out West Democracy Project, a working group was formed to develop a constitution and establish the Waitakere Ethnic Board which was formally launched on 20 September 2003 by Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Ethnic Affairs. Council supported the establishment of the Board through provision of staff time towards the development of the constitution, returning officers for the inaugural AGM and subsequently provided committee secretarial support and a meeting venue at Council for the Board's Executive.

Still in its infancy (3rd year since inception)

The WEB has been involved in aligning itself with strategic partners who either deliver or advocate for the migrant and refugee people. Building collaborative associations with similar and supportive organizations have also been paramount during my term

The networking meetings have addressed issues pertinent to our people, issues such as settlement, employment, education, safety, discrimination, participation. Reflecting the Local Government Act 2000, the wellbeing of any people being paramount has been advocated by the board. Obviously associations with the Human Rights Commission, Office of Ethnic Affairs, Settlement Support Organisations, CAB's, Families Commission, Educational organizations, Asian Police, are just a few we have networked with.

Capacity building, leadership opportunities have been seen in the Shared Work schedule between the Council and WEB. Certainly with the commitment of a three year continued funding, it is anticipated that outcomes will need to reflect this, however a recent draft is requiring Further discussions before a final commitment from WEB.

As a growing child there is much that the WEB is keen to learn and develop as a Universal space for all migrant people. A migrant centre to house services such as settlement support, career advisory, social services groups, ESOL, language translations, is a gap in Waitakere for our people. Its about bringing to them a space to call their own, a place visible to them and to raise their self esteem. The reluctance to request support of the mono culture of NZ is seen as a lack of initiative by some, however for some the transition time for adaptation in a new country has not been an easy one, especially for migrants of Asian backgrounds and refugees who have lived their lives in camps and confinement.

With continuity WEB endeavours to break these barriers and has organized few events to bring cultures together and unite people. This has however taken WEB time and resources, although this has made a big impact in the community and council.

Our commitment to bring unity in diversity in our City of Waitakere by way of The Race Relations Day and the Diwali Festivals have been

At times called a cheap partnership with the Council to promote its objectives, however in my opinion this has been a big profile builder for WEB. The Diwali is now a regional event in the NZ Ethnic Calendar.

The partnership with Council has continued to develop albeit slowly, Recognition of the ability of WEB volunteers and their achievements has been lacking or is not vocally recognized. As people of this City, the ethnic people are keen to contribute, however have been reluctant to be involved. Democracy is not sought proactively and sometimes this has been detrimental to families who are settling in. WEB is keen to promote this to the people to get their voices heard by local government.

Future:

The Review of the WEB Constitution is in the pipeline to ensure commitment by volunteers and is also seen as a way to give continuity to the visions and achievements.

A One year term becomes adhoc, lack of processes, therefore inability to measure outcomes although very good work is continuing.

WEB is seen as an example by other regions that could be replicated. It is quite visible out of Waitakere, however needs more visibility here in our City and recognition. Further interaction with Council, TTR, PAB, must also be encouraged to implement best services for the welling of all people.

Community Board Presentation by Ann Pala 2006