

Submission on the Local Government (Auckland Law Reform) Bill

To the Auckland Governance Legislation Select Committee

1. Introduction

Kia Ora, Greetings, Salam, Namaste, Ni Hao, Annung haseyo, Alo, Halo, Bonjour

1.1 This submission is from the Waitakere Ethnic Board.

Background to Waitakere Ethnic Board

The Waitakere Ethnic Board is an incorporated society established in September 2003. Waitakere Ethnic Board currently has about 250 members, comprising organisations and individuals with various multi-ethnic cultures, traditions and values. The Board is an elected board of 14 members resident in the Waitakere boundary. The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are the executive office bearers.

Waitakere Ethnic Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Waitakere City Council in 2004. The purpose of this formal agreement between the parties is to ***“work together to achieve the common goals such as social inclusion, acceptance and tolerance, respect and acknowledgement of diversity, pro-active and timely communication and sharing of information in relation to current and future needs, encouraging and promoting activities that foster greater understanding in Waitakere for the new settler communities.”***

1.2 Waitakere Ethnic Board has enhanced this agreement in Waitakere and beyond by working closely with Maori and Pasifika boards as well as organising and supporting the Race Relations Days, the Diwali Festival of Lights and the Moon Festivals. Waitakere Ethnic Board advocates for and represents the views of migrants and refugees who reside in Waitakere to Local and Central Government, and speaks on behalf of these communities on issues of concern to ensure settlement in Waitakere is enhanced. Waitakere Ethnic Board acknowledges and honours the Treaty of Waitangi and has included this in the Constitution. Waitakere Ethnic Board members visit the Howani Waititi Marae in Glen Eden for the Treaty of Waitangi Celebrations and have done so since inception. The Board has built and maintained a profile locally, regionally and nationally in view to promoting Waitakere Ethnic Board's ethos of ***‘bringing cultures together’*** and in so doing has developed efforts in collaborating on many social, cultural and economic initiatives.

Waitakere Ethnic Board associates with many diverse individuals, communities, cultures and their values. That we can collaborate with diverse communities on a democratic and transparent level is an important aspect of our representation of diversity and of those elected to the board over the years and those of the many members. People migrate globally to seek better opportunities. Waitakere Ethnic Board promotes social, cultural,

economic and environmental issues to the many diverse populations who contribute significantly to the demographic of not only Waitakere but the wider Auckland City.

1.3.1 In this submission we address our comments principally on a summary of our key concerns and recommendations on the third Bill. We wish to speak to our submission as part of the Select Committee Process.

- The establishment of a Pacific and Ethnic Advisory panels for Auckland;
- The establishment of a Maori Board;
- The electoral system for Local Body elections

2. Summary of Key Submission Points

2.1 The Establishment of a Pacific and Ethnic Advisory Panel for Auckland

Clause 111 provides for the establishment of Pacific and Ethnic Advisory Panels for the new Auckland Council. Waitakere Ethnic Board is in favour of this initiative, considering that this provides for a greater engagement with diverse communities. The Waitakere Ethnic Board opposes the appointment process by the Mayor solely and recommends that the appointment be done by the Auckland Council.

Waitakere Ethnic Board recommends that a consultation process be initiated with existing ethnic local council initiatives and other ethnic organisations in developing proposals for consideration with any other person/s the ATA sees fit to working in the best interests and preferences of the diverse ethnic populations of Auckland. The Ethnic Advisory Panel to reflect skills and experiences around strategies, policies, plans and bylaws of local council thus bringing leadership and governance to the consultation process. The Board would welcome the opportunity to engage in this process.

Waitakere Ethnic Board opposes the temporary nature of the panels, with dissolution of the advisory boards scheduled for 1 November 2013. Given the rapid growth evident in the Ethnic populations within Auckland, the Board recommends that the Advisory Panel be established as permanent entities to accommodate and sustain particularly the interests of existing and new comer populations. The Board also recommends that members of the Ethnic Advisory Panel be granted membership on the Auckland Council Standing Committees.

2.2. Maori Representation (Clause 45, new part 7)

Waitakere Ethnic Board strongly endorses the establishing of a Maori Board.

Waitakere Ethnic Board Constitution honours the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in our efforts to working together to maintaining unity in achieving our goals “of bringing cultures together”. The Board supports Maori representation in principle to enhance Maori leadership and its importance on the important advisory role on matters significant to Maori. The Board recommends appointments on Auckland Council Standing Committees. The Board has developed very good relationships with the Iwis in Waitakere building on sustainable communities principles of active participation.

Waitakere Ethnic Board notes that limitation to two Board representatives on Council committees dealing with the management and stewardship of natural and physical resources. Such limitation again confines the democratic process of the proposed Maori Board.

2.3 The Electoral System for Local Body Elections

Loss of community voices could disadvantage ethnic populations and alienate their democratic right to make decisions regarding local issues. As Local Boards will play an extremely important role in bridging the gap between elected representatives, Council officials and community, Waitakere Ethnic Board believes that a clearly defined structure of representation for Local Boards within the Auckland Council is necessary, particularly in the development of regional strategies and policy statements reflecting the diversity and demography of all people.

Waitakere Ethnic Board therefore recommends that the more proportional system of STV rather than FPP is followed.

As previously indicated Waitakere Ethnic Board would speak to this submission and requests to speak early evening due to the nature of a voluntary board.

On behalf of the
Waitakere Ethnic Board
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