

ROYAL COMMISSION ON AUCKLAND GOVERNANCE

SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION BY THE WAITAKERE ETHNIC BOARD 22 APRIL 2008

Kia Ora, Greetings, Namaste, Ni Hao, Annung haseyo, Alo, Aslaamwaleikum

BACKGROUND TO WAITAKERE ETHNIC BOARD

The Waitakere Ethnic Board is an incorporated society established in September 2003 by Hon. Chris Carter, the Minister of Ethnic Affairs. WEB currently has approximately 200 members with various ethnic backgrounds. The Board is an elected board of 14 members resident in the Waitakere boundary. The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are the office bearers.

The WEB 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 and for Waitakere City to be the "City of Choice" for the new settler communities. By way of this agreement the WEB organises and supports the Race Relations Day, the Diwali Festival of Lights and the Moon Festival. WEB advocates for and represents the views of migrants and refugees who reside in Waitakere City, to Local and Central Government, and speaks on behalf of these communities on issues of concern to ensure settlement in Waitakere is enhanced. WEB acknowledges and honours the Treaty of Waitangi and has included this in its Constitution and actively participates in Treaty Day celebrations.

The WEB would like the Commission to take these issues into account when it makes recommendations on the new governance arrangements for Auckland.

OVERVIEW

Issue 1: What kind of local government arrangements will help Auckland become a successful world-class city?

A world class city is about creating a city of inclusion, culturally, financially, economically, leading in education, politics, fashion/arts and entertainment. Features that associate an individual in the City they call home.

Question 1 – Do you agree with the list (transparency, accountability, efficient resource use, responsiveness) of what local government arrangements should ideally provide?

a) transparency

The existence in the level of bureaucracy in local government may benefit from a major overhaul. A movement towards 100 percent transparency in regards to rates, resource management consents, community projects etc will be a constructive democratic action, to enable passage of information for clarification. Civic service processes are made openly available for scrutiny, presently there are huge concerns and often minority communities are left guessing.

b) accountability

\$1.7 billion is a significant in relation to the total operating expenses (2007) and this can only be reflective of the ad hoc services provided for infrastructure and services by Central, regional and local government. A greater Auckland structure's appropriateness should be considered as it would reduce duplication of effort, thereby reduce costs.

c) efficient resource use

Currently each council is responsible for the procurement of its own services. If it brings together the economies scale of the greater Auckland area, it can make considerable savings.

The Auckland councils co-ordinate activities such as those in the water sector and have developed similar performance measures. With one bulk supplier each council procures separate retailers for supply, with different contractors, different contract terms and different levels of service. This contributes to councils having different charges and tariffs.

More services such as roads, rubbish collection, environmental services and park/reserves can be organised on the greater Auckland basis.

Regional Decision Making

Issue 2: What decisions should be made and implemented at a regional level? By what body or bodies or processes should these decisions be made?

Decisions and activities that are of regional significance should be made and undertaken at a regional level, such as new development or major upgrade to regional arterial roads; infrastructure projects that are over certain scale e.g. the Eden Park upgrade, railway double tracking, electrification, etc.

These activities would have direct impact on the Auckland region as a whole. Decisions to be made at a regional level would enable all parties in the region to be involved, and supporting activities associated with these major projects can be planned and programmed at local level.

Co-ordination with the Region

Issue 3: To what extent should individual local councils follow consistent practice? How do we ensure that decisions made at national, regional and local government levels are consistent with each other, and that they lead in the same direction?

The body responsible for regional decision making should be the proposed Greater Auckland Council, have representatives from all local councils (include local democracy) in the region. The GAC should be responsible for activities that are of regional significance, large scale activities (e.g. projects exceed certain dollar value)

Q6: Should the Auckland region retain its current boundaries or should they be altered?

To better represent communities of interest and minority communities Waitakere could be further investigated to extend its boundaries, perhaps include Avondale and Blockhouse Bay. Local councils are only legitimate if the population recognises itself in them and identifies with them.

Decisions and activities that are less than certain scale, unique to local area, or of routine basis, should be made and undertaken at a local level. This not only would give local council decision making opportunity, but would streamline decision making process and hence improve operation efficiency of councils at both regional level and local level.

Inconsistency of standards.

Development standards: The seven territorial authorities have different engineering standards. For example, the standards in their Codes of Practice for urban subdivision require different design requirements, different materials, different construction standards and different testing requirements. These inconsistencies create confusion and additional costs for developers, designers and contractors. In specifying new work the councils also have different specifications for design and construction. This impacts on the ability of the engineers in the region (and around the country) in adapting to the different needs of seven councils.

Contributions policies: There are also very different requirements in District Plans for financial contributions and development contributions under the Local Government Act. These provisions are compounded by different interpretations by officers of the seven councils.

District Plans also have a range of other provisions that directly impact on engineering standards of design.

Council services: Services such as water supply, wastewater, storm water and roading interact across territorial authority boundaries and these services, by their very nature, do not recognise boundaries. The current arrangement limits the design, planning and funding of these essential services from such a holistic viewpoint and leads to inefficient service delivery and costly duplication of effort.

Asset management: The councils also have varying asset management practices for these services including different maintenance, renewal and upgrading strategies leading to fragmented network standards and levels of service.

Infrastructure planning: Planning of regional services across territorial boundaries is currently fragmented and outcomes are delayed due to consultative processes as all eight councils – including the regional council have to have a say. This adds delay costs and costs to projects.

The topography, geology, environment and climatic conditions of the Auckland region are similar. The community expectations and economic circumstances are also very similar, so there is no valid reason why different standards should apply.

Engineers and contractors who work in the region are under considerable pressure in complying with this plethora of different standards and fragmented regulatory environment. As a result their productivity is greatly reduced and the limited capacity of this resource is not being utilised to its full capabilities.

A future solution for the governance of Auckland must include a new mechanism (among several entities) or a single entity that produces a much greater degree of standardisation of service delivery, asset management practices and development and regulatory standards to the Auckland region.

Ethnic Communities – Diversity an Asset to the Well-being of Waitakere

Issue 4

Q1. Do councils respond to the needs of ethnic communities?

Ethnic communities wish to work with Council in a proactive responsive manner rather than be treated as passive subjects who respect and adhere to policies that they have no input in. Ethnic communities are keen to be part of the policy making process and

delivery of services to our community. Council need to recognize the resources and networks that the ethnic communities have and the potential in sharing and influencing decisions. The Waitakere City Council has a submission process via the LTCCP. The communicating of this process needs to be open, honest and easy to understand. Engagement needs to reflect fair and inclusive process for all. Some Communities have taken opportunities to submit. The WEB on behalf of the diversity has sought funding to promote building cultures, creating spaces and events such as Diwali (the festival of lights and the Moon Festival) to reach out socially and culturally. A genuine intention by the community received negative commentary by way of WEB being a cheap promotional tool for the Council. The WEB drafted a submission to Government in regards to settlement of ethnic communities and in doing so two positions had been identified to work with new settlers. However, there is no research that has been made available by Council to convey to the ethnic communities the efforts of council in regards to needs specific to settlement, eg. education, employment, or housing. Many communities do not know of the processes that they could tap into for their needs ie. Rates rebates are foreign. Ethnic communities are assets to council and more likely to own homes and businesses. More ethnic people employment needs could be met by Council which is the largest employer in Waitakere. There is a tendency to discriminate on accent and international standards of education for many countries. This is an Auckland wide issue. Migrant responsive positions under the council H.R. process has lacked or failed to proactively promote the needs of ethnic communities in Waitakere due to the duration of employment and the inconsistency of funding available.

Q2. Are ethnic communities able to access council services? Generally the Waitakere City Council is client focused, have responded to the requests of ethnic communities. Some translation services are also available. The WEB is an autonomous body and is continuing to work in collaboration with community groups of Waitakere to promote council messages to its members. However there needs to be more done, perhaps a department within Council that is capable of further promoting the services of council and is the interactive culturally appropriate face for the ethnic communities. The lack of cross cultural understanding is further impeded by the small number of ethnic employees at council. The Waitakere Multicultural and Migrant services in the Waitakere Libraries is a commendable effort, needs to be promoted further. ESOL services have its concerns as many non English speakers do not take advantage of this service, again lack of funding is a major issue to providing responsive services ie. Home tutoring or crèche needs for refugee children. Many ethnic communities because of constraints on their time and commitment to settlement do not necessarily interfere with the process of their local council. The WEB is well aware of these concerns; the Council needs to identify all new settler agencies, and to audit these services throughout the engagement process of service provision to ascertain successful end results, ie. Training for employment or further education is a necessary aspect of employment. New settler communities (especially refugees) need support to become genuine contributors to Waitakere, not merely be seen as numbers for funding and grants.

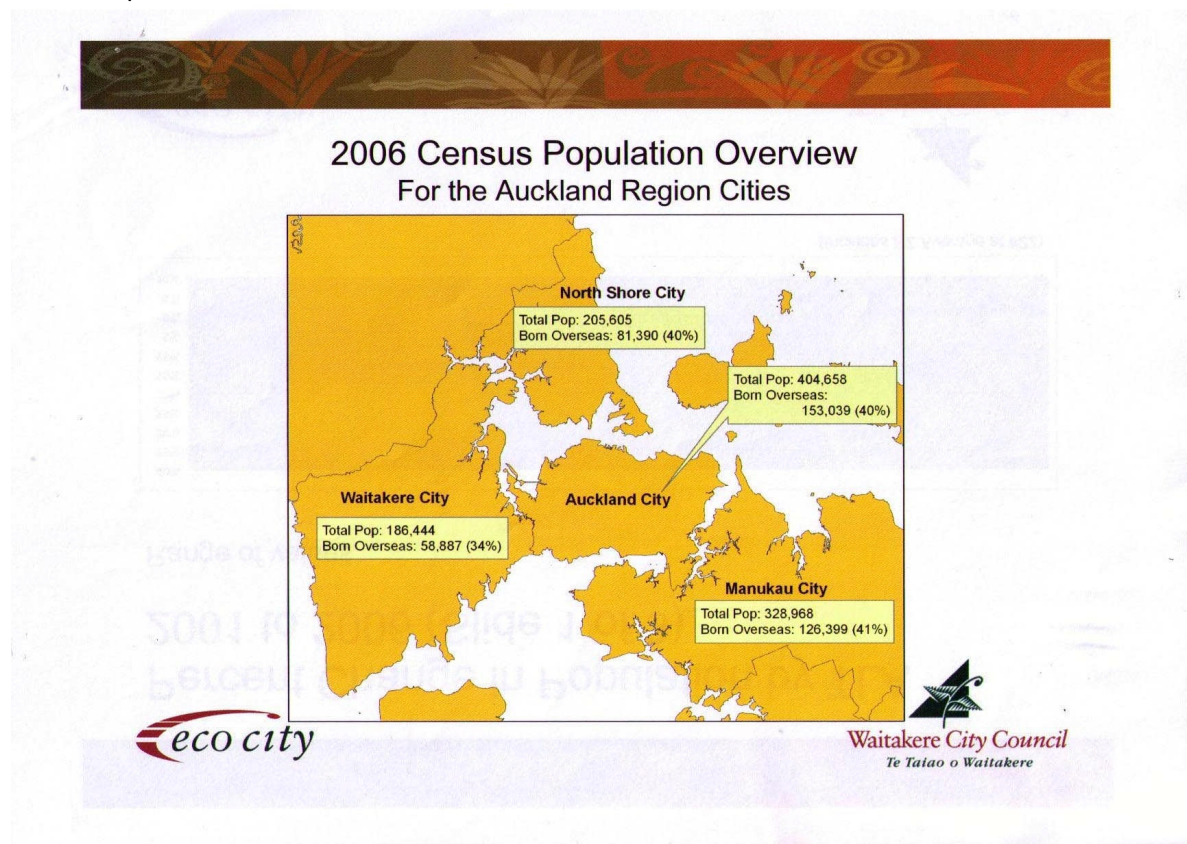
Q3. What changes would you like to see? Better representation. Human rights be the basis for policy development and standards of engagement. Presently, WEB associates in an Advisory capacity only and has representatives attend meetings within Council in their own voluntary time. Lack of information is a concern and adhoc decisions create tension. There is no policy in council to make available a seat for an ethnic representative without being voted in the local elections. The election process is not suited for ethnic representation either by way of a Councillor or a community board member. The sparsely settled communities do not compose a huge ethnic population in any one ward. Ethnic communities need representation and need to have capable leaders in decision making processes of council that affect them. To ensure this happens in the future, an ethnic ward with two or three possible representatives will increase immensely the ability of council to serve the ethnically diverse rate payer

communities. A shared voice is a strong voice. The Waitakere local body elections saw two WEB members standing as candidates for the local elections without success to be part of councils decision making process. The future of Waitakere is predominantly migrant populations. Presently 34% of the population is born overseas. This trend is captured Auckland wide in the 2006 stats attached. The next 10 years it is expected to grow further and increase in the aged population is envisaged.

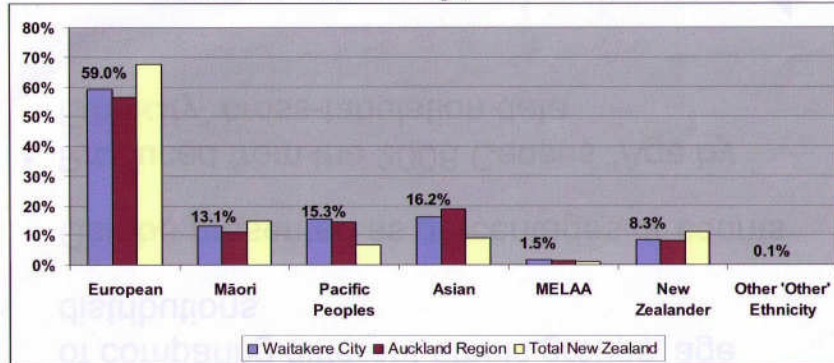
Ethnic communities involvement in the democratic process is a tried and tested method set to fail. Resource, information provision, profiling candidates, funding are issues. Ethnic representation on our local government bodies is in no way significant to the diverse communities that live in the wider Auckland region nor Waitakere. Nominations process have yet to identify ethnic community leaders in significant board roles, ie district health or funding bodies. Local bodies should encourage a broader range of candidates so that councils have better representation of all diversity. There is call to increase ethnic participation, to include gender balance in governance. There is no doubt that there are 'calibre candidates' and these are the people we seek to represent us. Equity, transparency, and responsive local politics are crucial for this to happen. Ethnic communities are part of this society and must be acknowledged by host communities as contributors. The model to be set is from the top.

Conclusion

The WEB would like the Commission to take these issues into account when it makes recommendations on the new governance arrangements for Auckland. Attached are Ethnic Population Statistics for 2006.



Level 1 Ethnicity, 2006 Census



Waitakere results, 2001: European (72%), Maori (13%), Pacific (15%), Asian (11%), Other (1%)



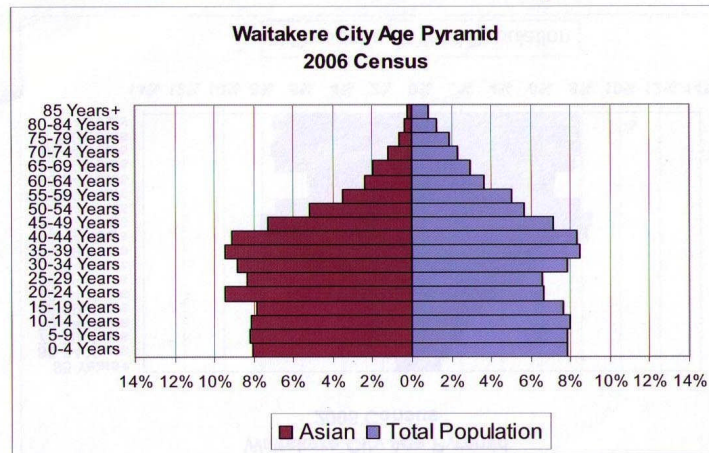
Percent born Overseas – Waitakere by Level 1 Ethnicity

- Maori ethnic group – 2%
- New Zealander – 8%
- European ethnic groups – 22%
- Pacific Peoples – 42%
- Other ethnic groups – 74%
- Asian ethnic groups – 80%
- MELAA ethnic group – 81%
- **Total – 34%**

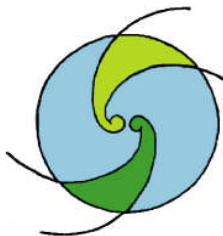
2006 Census



Asian Ethnic Groups



Submitters on behalf of the Waitakere Ethnic Board



Waitakere Ethnic Board
Tū, tū-tū mā hārengā tangata
Bringing Cultures Together

Ann Pala
President
Waitakere Ethnic Board

Vincent Lin
Executive Board Member
Waitakere Ethnic Board