

TE HONONGA AKORANGA

COMET



Submission on the Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill

Submission [105/21](#)
Prepared on behalf of COMET Auckland, February 2021

Whakatauāki

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi ki te raranga i te whāriki kia mōhio tātou ki ā tātou.

Mā te mahi tahi o ngā whenu, mā te mahi tahi o ngā kairaranga, ka oti tēnei whāriki.

I te otinga me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.

Ā tana wā, me titiro hoki ki ngā raranga i makere nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

- Kūkupa Tirikatene

The tapestry of understanding cannot be woven by one strand alone.

Only by the working together of strands and the working together of weavers will such a tapestry be completed.

With its completion let us look at the good that comes from it.

And, in time we should also look at those stitches which have been dropped, because they also have a message.

About COMET Auckland

[COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga](#) is an independent charitable trust and Auckland Council's CCO focused on education, skills and lifelong learning across Auckland and, increasingly, other parts of the country. Our latest Statement of Intent is [here](#).

Briefly, our work involves:

Sector leadership – mapping data and evidence, working with sector leaders to identify and prioritise the most pressing areas of focus, and connecting people around that common agenda, to plan collaborative action.

That can then lead to advocacy or changes to partners' business as usual, or sometimes to planning and trialling new ways of working (incubation projects).

These incubation projects generally develop through scoping and planning to trialling, and then implementation and evaluation, with the goal of handing them on once they are fully developed so we can move on to focus on another part of the system.

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COMET Auckland Te Hononga Akoranga is a council-controlled organisation of Auckland Council. As a local body organisation, we see the value of both greater diversity and council being able to fulfil their obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

There are over 180,000 Māori living here in Tāmaki Makaurau. We recognise the importance of Māori bodies such as the Independent Māori Statutory Board to promote issues of significance to Māori to Council and to hold Council to account on delivery for Māori. However, they are not a substitute for full Māori representation on Council. For example, while they have committee voting rights, they do not have full voting rights on the Governing Body.

To support ongoing commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we advocate for all councils to be able to establish Māori wards, and we believe that this should also apply in Tāmaki Makaurau, with Māori wards and also the full resourcing of the Independent Māori Statutory Board.

Ten percent of members elected to local government in Aotearoa are Māori. Only a few years ago, this was five percent. We recognise that Māori wards will support the importance of the Māori community voice, giving assurance that issues that concern Māori can be dealt with more appropriately. It can also provide greater confidence in local government decision-making processes, for tangata whenua and other ethnic groups, knowing that there is a distinctive Māori perspective. The establishment of Māori wards will also guarantee the place of Māori at the council table similar to that of Māori seats in Parliament.

All councils currently have had the option to establish Māori wards by resolution and this can be challenged by polls all around the country. There are examples where councils have voted to support Māori wards such as New Plymouth, but a community poll overturned that decision. We believe that this is unfair and also discriminatory, because other decisions of local bodies are not subject to this level of veto.

Approving this bill with urgency will allow councils which have already voted for Māori wards in the last few months to action their decision without having to face a poll. This bill will also give the opportunity for other councils around Aotearoa to decide whether to introduce Māori wards in time for the local government elections in 2022.

For these reasons we support immediate approval of the bill.