

11 February 2021



GREAT LAKE TAUPŌ

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Tēnā koutou katoa,

SUBMISSION TO THE MĀORI AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE LOCAL ELECTORAL (MĀORI WARDS AND MĀORI CONSTITUENCIES) AMENDMENT BILL

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Māori Affairs Select Committee on the Local Electoral (Māori wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill. Please note that due to the short timeframe for submissions this submission has not been ratified by the Taupō District Council and won't be a unanimous view. However all Councillors have been sent this submission via email. This submission will be considered by the Taupō District Council at their next Council meeting.

The Taupō District is home to nearly 40,000 residents and is located at the heart of the North Island with Lake Taupō at its centre. We acknowledge our iwi partners Ngāti Tūwharetoa, including Ngāti Turangitukua, Ngāti Tahu and Ngāti Whāoa, Raukawa, Ngāti Hineuru, Ngāti Manawa and the multiple co-governance entities of our District, involving Lake Taupō, the Waikato River and the Kaingaroa forest lands.

On 23 November 2020 Taupō District Council resolved to establish Māori wards for the Taupō District, for the 2022 local government elections. I note that while it was a majority decision, the decision was not unanimous.

The reasons for this decision were that the Council:

- recognises Council's iwi partners;
- values having a mandated Māori worldview at the Council decision making table, rather than in an advisory role;
- recognises its statutory obligations to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes and to improve Māori capacity to contribute to the decision-making processes;
- recognises the partnership principles in Te Tiriti o Waitangi;
- has been working with iwi partners to research, develop and refine options for Māori representation in Council- the establishment of Māori wards is one of these options; and
- in 2017 undertook to review Māori representation component of the representation review in 2020.

By way of background, in November 2017 Council discussed with iwi leaders whether to establish Māori wards for the Taupō District. This was part of Council's regular 6-yearly cycle to review representation requirements. At that time iwi leaders identified a need for a voice at Council's decision-making table but also to be unified in their

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dealings with Council. At that time Council decided not to introduce Māori wards but did instead commit to work in collaboration with our District iwi partners and Māori to explore and assess all options for Māori participation in decision-making by the Council. As an intermediary step, Māori representatives were added on Council committees, with the exception of our Turangi-Tongariro Community Board, which is prevented by legislation.

Council staff have been working in collaboration with iwi and Māori to research and develop a preferred option for Māori representation in Council decision-making for discussion between partners. Through this project all parties recognise that for Māori and Council to work in partnership and for Māori to have representation in Council decision-making, a mix of mechanisms needs to be implemented. The establishment of Māori wards is only one part of this package of mechanisms. In addition to the wards, a way for all iwi of the Taupō District to have voice in Council's work needs to be developed. This work is due for completion later this year

Council is also aware that there has been a petition started in Taupō District to demand a poll be undertaken on the establishment of Māori wards.

Given the above, the Council supports the Government addressing the inequalities that the current legislation provides (when comparing Māori Wards to all other wards), including the removal of the ability for binding polls to be held on establishing Māori wards as it recognises that this provision:

- Provides a barrier to establishing Māori wards and better representation in Council.
- Requires a different, more difficult process to be followed to establish Māori wards than general wards
- Polls are expensive to hold (between \$85,000 to \$90,000 for Taupō District)
- Polls cause community division and animosity and often detrimental to community wellbeing and relationships between Māori, the community and Council.

The Council also supports the transitional provisions of the Bill in that they allow the Council to either continue, or consult, or reconsider our decision on the establishment of Māori wards, a process we will undertake on the passing of the Bill.

Taupō District Mayor, David Trewavas, Council's Head of Community, Culture and Heritage, Dylan Tahau and Strategic Adviser - Māori, Sue Mavor would like to present this submission to the select committee tomorrow and answer any questions.

Kind regards,



Gareth Green
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER