



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

10 February 2021



Public Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Submission

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Kāhore taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini

We cannot succeed without the support of those around us

About the PSA

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 78,000 members. We are a democratic and bicultural organisation representing people working in: the Public Service including for departments, crown agents and other crown entities, and state owned enterprises; local government; tertiary education institutions; and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

Te Rūnanga O Ngā Toa Awhina is the governance structure established to provide leadership to our Māori membership and to ensure a strong Māori voice is represented within our union. We are proud to have the support of 16% of Māori membership within the PSA to ensure a strong Māori voice is present across all sectors of the PSA. This includes an effective structure support of Māori Rūnanga delegates to engage on interests or matters that affect Māori.

The PSA is affiliated to Te Kauae Kaimahi the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Public Services International and UniGlobal.



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Our Submission

Recommendation

The PSA strongly supports the repealing of the mechanism in the Local Electoral Act (2001) that allows for a plebiscite to overturn a council recommendation to establish a Māori ward and constituencies as well as the introduction of the provision for local authorities to make decisions on Māori wards and constituencies in time for the 2022 local elections.

Māori in the PSA

Māori workers are essential to each of the PSA's five sectors and make up a significant proportion of the workforce. Māori comprise a high proportion of workers working across Rātonga mahi ā te Kāwanatanga (the public service), Rātonga Mahi ā Hāpori (the community sector), Rāngai Tūmatanui (state services), our members in Pōari Hauora ā Rohe (DHB's) and Kāwanatanga ā Rohe (Local government) compared to the average number of Māori in the New Zealand Working Age population. However, a 2015 report from the New Zealand Human Rights Commission on Employment Equity in the public service found that "Māori representation is highest at the front line but drops away the more distant the work is from the public interface".¹ The pay gap for Māori across the public service is 11 per cent, which the Te Kawa Mataaho acknowledges is due to Māori and Pasefika workers being over-represented in lower paid occupations.²

We know, that in order to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi, ensure tino rangatiratanga for Māori and improve the lives of working Māori; Māori must have fair and adequate representation across all our governing bodies, this includes local government.

¹ Human Rights Commission. 2014. What's Working: Improving equal employment opportunities in the public service. <https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/1614/2360/7114/HRC-Whats-Working-web.pdf> p8-10

² <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/ethnic-pay-gaps>



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The Government must show leadership to improve Māori representation and participation in local government. Māori are highly under-represented in local government, and current legislative frameworks do not facilitate either greater representation, or models of co-governance that reflect our ti Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and that are truly bi-cultural. We support the wider debate around structures that will support substantive and meaningful Māori engagement in the democratic structures and in council decision-making.

Establishing Māori Wards is one way of ensuring Māori voices are heard in the community where otherwise historically representation has been hard to achieve. Currently we have national representation through the seven Māori seats, however this covers a large area and many iwi. As with Māori representation at a national level, Māori representation at a local level would affirm rights guaranteed to Māori as Tangata Whenua under te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We note that, to date nine councils have voted in favour of establishing a Māori seat in time for the 2022 elections only to have the decision challenged and the mechanism in the Local Electoral Act (2001) that allows for a plebiscite to overturn a council recommendation to establish a Māori ward utilised.

The PSA strongly supports the repealing of the mechanism in the Local Electoral Act (2001) that allows for a plebiscite to overturn a council recommendation to establish a Māori ward. We consider that this is an important part of a conversation about how to improve Māori participation and representation at the local government level, which may culminate in changes to the Local Government Act to strengthen Treaty of Waitangi-based governance approaches.

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