

Representation Review 2018 Hearings: Waitematā Local Board submission on Ward boundary changes

Thank you for the opportunity to present.

We appreciate that every 6 years a review of Auckland Council representation arrangements is required including whether the wards properly reflect their populations and that the outcome of the review applies at the next local body election (2019)

As you are well aware the Auckland Council review of the ratio of population to number of elected members showed four wards did not comply with the 10% (more or less than the average) guideline. The Waitematā and Gulf Ward population differs from the average per member by 43 per cent. On behalf of the Waitematā Local Board my submission is focused on the proposed Waitematā and Gulf ward boundary change.

The Waitematā Local Board wishes to see ward and local board boundaries continue to be aligned and as little change as is possible. This is consistent with Local Electoral Act 2001 section 19T that states *(c) that, so far as is practicable, ward boundaries coincide with any local board area or community boundaries.*

There are very good reasons for this – for example greater cohesion, stronger representation & engagement. Misalignment will create confusion and a number of issues for Waitematā for example four Councillors rather than one will overlap the local board; confusing electoral arrangements at election time .

Every effort should be made to maintain aligned boundaries and a solution found that future proofs Auckland representation without disruptive ward boundary changes every 6 years (for Waitematā and Gulf this is guaranteed to happen every 6 years because of high population growth).

We note that 88% of submitters from Waitematā opposed the boundary changes. The consultation process has confirmed the strong Waitematā community of interest for both the local board and ward.

Our preferred option for rectifying the non-complying variance of the Waitematā and Gulf Ward is to seek urgent legislative change to the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 (the Act) to allow Auckland Council to determine the number of members on the Governing Body. This change would be to enable the addition of another governing body member and much more minimal and less disruptive changes to Council ward boundaries. It is highly likely in the future we will need a City Centre ward and/or Gulf island ward to manage growing population

We acknowledge the importance of equal representation for equal populations is an absolutely fundamental democratic principle and to ensure there is no gerrymandering. What is needed is make sure that those changes for fair and just representation are consistent with communities of interest.

We urge the working group to consider the options available under The Local Electoral Act 2001. It also notes the importance of keeping communities of interest together and allows *non-compliance of subsection (2) if it would: (ii) limit effective representation of communities of interest by dividing a community of interest between wards or subdivisions; (iii) or compliance with subsection (2) would limit effective representation of communities of interest by uniting within a ward or subdivision 2 or more communities of interest with few commonalities of interest*

In any case the Board strongly opposes the boundary as proposed that splits Grey Lynn in half creating a range of issues. For example the proposal would separate Grey Lynn's unique business community, effectively right down the middle. The business association has stated their concerns about the implication this may have in terms of exponentially increasing their interactions at local government level.

The current boundary of the Waitematā and Gulf Ward runs along Meola Creek through to the motorway. This forms a natural and logical western boundary for the ward. The large land mass of Western Springs Park serves as a physical and psychological boundary between Grey Lynn and Mt Albert (Albert-Eden-Roskill ward).

On the eastern side the feedback indicates more ambivalence about the proposed changes with a number of submitters identifying more strongly with the Orakei Ward. As mentioned we don't want misaligned ward and local board boundaries or a boundary change that would remove Grafton, Parnell or Newmarket from the Waitematā and Gulf ward but we acknowledge there is more acceptance of a change on our eastern boundary if these localized communities of interest are moved intact and not split.

I'd like to end with an observation about the consultation process. There has been a lot of confusion about the representation review and misunderstanding about what was being consulted on. The low key approach to the consultation (for example not even included in the print version of Our Auckland) has resulted in the local board being in the firing line about proposals that we had nothing to do with. We request that the political working group recommend that next time far greater thought goes into the consultation plan and communications.