



Mangapārae Papakāinga | Te Whiwhi Street Whatatutu Gisborne www.mangaparae.com

*Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies)
Amendment Bill*

29/05/2029

Submission by: Mangapārae Papakāinga

Firstly, let us start to express our disappointment that we need to do this submission at this stage of our nation's history. Our whanau made a submission (written and oral) to the Gisborne District Council to advocate for Māori wards in Gisborne. We were very proud of our Council and our community when they supported Māori wards in Gisborne, despite well organized opposition. Democracy for minorities should not be left at the mercy of majority rule, democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand should never cede to the tyranny of settler numerical superiority, this will lead to inevitable weakening of citizen participation and a less robust discourse at the table of democracy. Those who argue that this bill attempts to bring greater democracy are either disingenuous, lack a political analysis of power relationships and colonial history or simply wish to retain and unfair power advantage over whānau hapu and iwi. This is not the New Zealand that we hope for and want for our children's and moko futures where at every turn the majority culture undermines gains and advancement, so our submission is clear. For those driving this amendment we ask you to reflect on the legacy you wish to leave behind, we know you and where you come from, your walk and your personal life stories and request humbly that you do not progress this unfair, painful and manifestly unjust Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill

Our submission therefore reflects the collective voices of our hapū, and whānau, who are deeply concerned about the implications of this legislation on our rights, our representation, and our tino rangatiratanga. By imposing changes to the structure and functioning of Māori wards and constituencies without meaningful consultation and consent, the government is failing to uphold its obligations under Te Tiriti.

We feel that Māori wards and constituencies are crucial mechanisms for ensuring Māori representation in local government. They provide a platform for our voices to be heard and our interests to be safeguarded within the decision-making processes that affect our communities. The proposed changes threaten to dilute this representation and marginalize Māori voices, contrary to the principles of partnership and participation enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These views were presented by us in our presentation to the Gisborne District Council in support of Māori wards.

It is our view as the whanau of Mangāparae Papakāinga that the process leading to the

introduction of this amendment bill has been marked by a lack of genuine consultation with Māori. Effective consultation requires engagement that is timely, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and perspectives of Māori. The rushed nature of this legislation and the inadequate opportunities for Māori input demonstrate a disregard for these principles and undermine the legitimacy of the process.

The imposition of changes to Māori wards and constituencies without our consent infringes upon our autonomy and our ability to manage our own affairs. This not only hinders our capacity for self-determination but also impacts our social, economic, and cultural development. Strong Māori representation in local government is essential for advancing our communities and addressing the systemic inequities we face.

The manner in which this amendment bill is being pursued sets a troubling precedent for future legislation affecting Māori. If the government can unilaterally impose changes to our electoral arrangements without our consent, it raises concerns about the potential for further erosions of our rights and our autonomy. We urge the government to reconsider this approach and engage in meaningful dialogue with Māori to co-design solutions that respect our rights and aspirations.

Referendums when it concerns minorities disproportionately target mechanisms designed to improve Māori representation in local government, reinforcing existing inequalities. Therefore Māori, as a minority are more likely to have their interests overruled in referendums, perpetuating systemic disadvantage and exclusion from decision-making processes.

This will cause mental health harm for our whanau and Tamariki as locals and neighbours start to express racist comments in shops at work and at schools here in Gisborne. Referendums can become platforms for the expression of racist attitudes, with campaigns often stirring up anti-Māori sentiment and misinformation, leading to the emboldenment of hate crimes and wider acceptance of racism.

Similar to The Voice referendum minority indigenous populations suffer from majority rule, this is not democratic why follow other countries we are better than that. No equivalent referendums are required for other types of electoral arrangements or wards, highlighting a discriminatory standard applied specifically to Māori representation.

Therefore, democracy should ensure fair and equitable representation for all communities. Referendums on Māori wards undermine this principle by allowing the majority to decide on the political rights of a minority group. The integrity and inclusivity of local government are compromised when the establishment of Māori wards, intended to address historical and ongoing inequities, is subjected to popular vote.

Subjecting the rights of an indigenous minority to popular vote violates principles of human rights and equality, as recognized in international declarations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Māori have been historically underrepresented in local government. Establishing Māori wards helps to address this imbalance and ensure that Māori voices are heard in local decision-making processes. Māori make up a significant portion of New Zealand's population. It is essential that this demographic is adequately represented in councils to reflect the true diversity of the community.

In conclusion, please improve democratic participation does not stifle it, please improve our race relations not create division and more opportunities for grumpy people to express their racist thoughts and use their power against the very Māori neighbours who help the jump start their cars, buy their goods, lend their tools, stand next to them at the rugby on a rainy cold Saturday morning and have a latte afterwards. Politicians have the power and responsibility to create a better Aotearoa and if you don't change will inevitably arrive.

Dr Virginia Tamanui, Sjimmy Fransen and Mangāparae Papakāinga Whānau.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several vertical and diagonal strokes on the left, followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line extending to the right.