

**TE KAUNIHERA O TE AWA KAIRANGI | HUTT CITY COUNCIL**

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of The Hutt City Council held in the Council Chambers,  
2nd Floor, 30 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, on  
**Friday 6 September 2024 commencing at 3:00 pm**

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**PRESENT:**

Mayor C Barry (Chair)	Deputy Mayor T Lewis
Cr G Barratt	Cr J Briggs (via audio-visual link) (until 4.50pm)
Cr K Brown	Cr B Dyer
Cr S Edwards	Cr A Mitchell
Cr K Morgan	Cr C Parkin
Cr N Shaw (via audio-visual link)	Cr T Stallinger
Cr G Tupou	

**APOLOGIES:** There were no apologies.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

J Miller, Chief Executive  
A Blackshaw, Director Neighbourhoods and Communities  
J Griffiths, Director Strategy and Engagement  
J Kingsbury, Director Economy and Development (via audio-visual link) (part meeting)  
B Cato, Chief Legal Officer (part meeting)  
K Butler-Hare, Tumuaki Māori (part meeting)  
R Hardie, Head of Strategy and Policy (part meeting)  
C Ellis, Head of Chief Executive's Office (part meeting)  
K Stannard, Head of Democratic Services  
H Houppapa, Senior Policy Advisor | Pou Tohutohu Kaupapa Here Matua-Māori (part meeting)  
K Glanville, Senior Democracy Advisor  
J Randall, Democracy Advisor

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

Attendees at the meeting stood for a moment of silence for Māori Kingi Tūheitia.

**1. OPENING FORMALITIES - KARAKIA TIMATANGA**

Whakataka te hau ki te uru	<i>Cease the winds from the west</i>
Whakataka te hau ki te tonga	<i>Cease the winds from the south</i>
Kia mākinakina ki uta	<i>Let the breeze blow over the land</i>
Kia mātaratara ki tai	<i>Let the breeze blow over the ocean</i>
E hī ake ana te atakura	<i>Let the red-tipped dawn come with</i>
He tio, he huka, he hau hū	<i>a sharpened air.</i>
Tihei mauri ora.	<i>A touch of frost, a promise of a</i>
	<i>glorious day.</i>

**2. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments are recorded under the item to which they relate.

### 4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Cr Dyer declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 6) Pito One Name Change Joint Submission, and took no part in discussion or voting on the matter.

### 5. DECISION TO ESTABLISH MĀORI WARDS AT THE 2025 ELECTIONS

Report No. HCC2024/4/238 by the Head of Strategy and Policy

Speaking under public comment, **Vicki Hollywell, General Manager of the Wellington Tenth Trust, the Palmerston North Māori Reserve Trust**, expressed support for Māori wards. She acknowledged the strong Ahu Whenua Trust relationship with Council through its Tākai Here partnership. She believed that Council should hear other Māori voices.

Speaking under public comment, **Te Karanga O Te Tui Marino, Environmental Liaison Officer at Hikoiko Management**, expressed support for Māori wards. He noted the inconsistency of using a different constitutional arrangement to decide on Māori wards. He believed the central government's requirement for a referendum reduced the chances of the Council fulfilling its commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. He said a Māori ward would guarantee at least one Māori voice on Council.

Speaking under public comment, **Liz Mellish, Chair of Palmerston North Māori Reserve Trust**, expressed support for Māori wards. She considered a Māori ward was important for Māori and for democracy. She said it would show how democracy could support equity.

Speaking under public comment, **Anaru Ryall** expressed support for Māori wards, emphasising the importance of having a Māori councillor to represent te ao Māori and uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Anaru believed central government was forcing an unnecessary and divisive referendum and asked members to champion community support for Māori wards in 2025.

Speaking under public comment, **Hakepa** expressed support for Māori wards. Hakepa noted that Māori had become disconnected due to a history of land theft and colonisation and that some Māori had instead connected to gangs. Hakepa believed the Crown was misguided in thinking Māori had ceded sovereignty in 1840.

Speaking under public comment, **Pam Hanna, Sylvia Allen and Barbara Scott** expressed support for Māori wards. They believed that since councils were able to establish a rural ward without a referendum, it should be the same for a Māori ward. They asked the Chief Executive to petition central government for the referendum on Māori wards to be voluntary.

Speaking under public comment, **Michelle Ducat** expressed support for Māori wards. Michelle said there was no excuse for anyone not understanding the meaning of the

articles in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Michelle asked Council to work hard to encourage its community to take a stand if Māori wards were taken to a referendum.

Speaking under public comment, **Fanua Rimoni** read a letter on behalf of the Principal of Wainuiomata Intermediate, attached as pages 11-14 to the minutes.

Speaking under public comment, **Riana Leafa Paki, representing Ngā Hau e Wha and Wainuiomata Marae, and as a #TAG member, an ex-student of Wainuiomata Intermediate and in support of the letter from the Principal of Wainuiomata Intermediate**, expressed support for Māori wards and community boards, emphasising their importance as advocacy platforms for young Māori. Riana highlighted the impact of supportive communities on the success of young Māori and urged members to retain both Māori wards and community boards to prevent the loss of progress.

RESOLVED: (Mayor Barry/Deputy Mayor Lewis)

**Minute No. C 24401**

*"That Council agrees to extend the time for public comment until all public speakers have spoken."*

Speaking under public comment, **Katie Brown, Chief Executive of Te Hapori Matihiko and Te Ao Matihiko**, expressed support for Māori wards. She considered it unfortunate that central government was questioning Council's authority. She believed that Māori representation needed to be guaranteed. She noted that the social and environmental benefits of working with Māori had positively benefited everybody.

Speaking under public comment, **Keelan Renata, a student from Wainuiomata High School (Te Wharekura)**, expressed support for Māori wards. He said it was upsetting to hear that his culture's representation on Council was being questioned. He emphasised the importance of a Māori ward councillor who understood the Māori worldview. He believed a Māori ward councillor would enable better outcomes for young Māori, the land and the environment. He asked Councillors to uphold the interest of Māori in their decision.

Speaking under public comment, **Teira Jayde Rawiri, a student from Wainuiomata High School (Te Wharekura)**, expressed support for Māori wards. She believed that a Tangata Whenua voice would prioritise decisions to support the wellbeing of water, land and people. She stated that what was good for Māori would be good for everyone. She urged Council to work on educating its community now to ensure the referendum in 2025 was a success.

Speaking under public comment, **Barbara Hay** expressed support for Māori wards and urged Council to reaffirm its decision to establish one. She acknowledged that many of her generation drew their ideas from a position of white privilege. She said that until there was a true partnership with Māori, ensuring the Māori voice was heard was important. She asked Council to challenge central government's compulsory referendum.

Speaking under public comment, **Muriel Tunuho, representing the E Tu union**, expressed support for Māori wards. She said central government was driving a wedge of division. She acknowledged Council for its bravery, progress, and acting with aroha.

Speaking under public comment, **Linda Olsen** expressed support for Māori wards. She

asked Council to fly the United Tribes flag and the Tino Rangatiratanga flag. Linda described the importance of practising Kotahitanga. She urged Council not to waste its money on a referendum.

Speaking under public comment, **Wayne Paaka**, one of Aotearoa's first bilingual teachers, expressed support for Māori wards. He said they showed a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. He believed ensuring that Māori voices were heard in local government was important as they brought more effective solutions, valuable perspectives and inclusive and equitable outcomes for residents. He highlighted that Māori wards would strengthen community cohesion. He encouraged the Councillor who abstained from the vote on Māori wards in 2023 to reconsider and vote. He noted the recent passing of Elizabeth (Topsy) Remuera, a long-standing teacher and Principal at Pukeatua Primary School.

Speaking under public comment, **Lillian Pak** expressed support for Māori wards. She highlighted that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was the first immigration policy in New Zealand, enabling her to live here. She believed it was important because it contained information on how New Zealanders should conduct themselves. She explained that when Tangata Whenua were not treated well in New Zealand, she despaired that her culture would ever be treated as equals. She expressed hope that Council would be on the correct side of history and vote to retain Māori wards.

Speaking under public comment, **Tauri Dawson** expressed support for Māori wards. He asked councillors to make decisions based on integrity and good character. He urged them to send the right message to the young people who had spoken during public comment. He challenged Councillors to research the circumstances of Māori in the community and vote with their conscience.

Speaking under public comment, **Dina Awarau and Mere te Paki, representatives of Hutt Union and Community Health Service (HUCS)**, expressed support for Māori wards. They said they also spoke on behalf of many Kaupapa Māori groups around the Hutt Valley that supported Māori wards. They noted the importance of having a Councillor in a dedicated seat around the Council table who shared the values of young Māori and gave them a voice. They advised Māori wards were also supported by Te Ngākau Kahukura, a rainbow community partnership.

Cr Dyer left the meeting at 4.17pm and rejoined the meeting at 4.22pm.

Speaking under public comment via audio-visual link, **Kara Puketapu-Dentice, Chief Executive of Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o Te Ika**, strongly supported Māori wards. He pointed out that Kohanga Reo had played a significant role in revitalising Māoritanga since the 1980s. He mentioned that many thousands of people had been raised with Māori as their first language and took great pride in their Māori heritage. He expressed his hope that Councillors would fully support the establishment of Māori wards.

The Head of Strategy and Policy elaborated on the report.

Cr Mitchell foreshadowed his intention to move four additional recommendations. He advised that these recommendations opposed the idea of allowing public polls to veto Māori wards, emphasised the commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, urged

central government also to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and asked for advice on the implications of not holding a referendum on Māori wards during the 2025 local elections. He believed that the requirement to hold a binding referendum on Māori wards in the 2025 local elections did not reflect the will of Council.

Cr Barratt expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. She stated that a vote to reaffirm the decision was a vote of integrity.

Cr Shaw expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. She said central government's requirement for councils to relitigate a decision it made in 2023 indicated a lack of trust in councils. She considered central government's action discriminatory and created division.

Cr Briggs expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. He apologised for potentially being absent from the vote but confirmed his support for establishing a Māori ward.

Cr Brown expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. She noted that the deep division created over the past year due to government policies had impacted Māori and damaged relationships. She expressed frustration that Council was forced to fight for something it should not have to fight for. She believed that the people and rangatahi of Lower Hutt would vote to support a Māori ward.

Cr Briggs left the meeting at 4.47pm.

Cr Morgan expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. She emphasised that having a dedicated Council seat for Māori was important and would benefit the rangatahi of Lower Hutt. She voiced her belief that central government's referendum was discriminatory and would polarise the country. She considered it a challenge and a call to action.

Cr Briggs rejoined the meeting at 4.49pm and left the meeting at 4.50pm.

Cr Dyer expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. He referred to the unnecessary cost of a referendum for Lower Hutt. He mentioned the unnecessary expense of holding a referendum for Lower Hutt and expressed frustration that the central government had compelled the Council to reconsider a decision already made. He believed this decision allowed Council to be on the right side of history.

Cr Stallinger expressed reservations about the value of a Māori ward, considering that it might not lead to better representation for Māori.

Cr Edwards expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. He said the compulsory referendum might result in missing the chance to understand the benefits of a Māori ward.

Cr Tupou expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward, considering Te Tiriti o Waitangi the cornerstone of New Zealand's constitution. He expressed frustration at being coerced into revisiting a previous decision and urged members to stand firm under the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Deputy Mayor Lewis expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a

Māori ward. She pointed out that the high cost of the debate was due to central government's directive, but she believed that the Māori people would bear the most significant cost. She emphasised that all New Zealanders should consider the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and collaborate to avoid continuing to bear the cost in the future.

Cr Parkin expressed support for reaffirming Council's decision to establish a Māori ward. He stated that having Māori representation at the Council table would benefit everyone and was appropriate for New Zealand.

Mayor Barry expressed support for establishing a Māori ward, noting the community's attendance and love expressed. He assured that Te Tiriti o Waitangi would be honoured through partnership. He acknowledged the need for love and compassion to recognise the journey of some New Zealanders who did not yet understand the value of te ao Māori.

Cr Mitchell, during his right of reply, mentioned that mayors and councillors across the country recognised the positive impact of having Māori ward councillors in their decision-making processes and advocated for the establishment of a Māori ward for effective Māori representation at the Council table. He reassured Māori that their cultural wellbeing and overall health were crucial to Council.

The motion was taken in parts. Parts (1)-(3) and (5)-(9) were declared CARRIED by a show of hands. Part (4) was declared CARRIED by division.

**RESOLVED:** (UNANIMOUS) (Cr Mitchell/Cr Morgan)

**Minute No. C 24402**

*"That Council:*

- (1) *notes that on 21 November 2023, Council resolved to establish a Māori ward in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt;*
- (2) *notes that the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act 2024 requires Council to actively consider and resolve to reaffirm or rescind its resolution on 21 November 2023 to establish a Māori ward;*
- (3) *notes that provisions of the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act 2024 impose additional, unbudgeted costs on Council;*
- (4) *agrees to reaffirm its decision of 21 November 2023 to establish a Māori ward in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt;*

The motion was declared CARRIED by division with the voting as follows:

**For**

**Against**

Mayor Barry  
Deputy Mayor Lewis  
Cr Barratt  
Cr Brown  
Cr Dyer  
Cr Edwards  
Cr Mitchell  
Cr Morgan  
Cr Parkin

Cr Shaw  
Cr Tupou

Total: 11

0

Cr Stallinger abstained from voting on the above matter.

- (5) *affirms its opposition to provisions allowing Māori wards and constituencies to be vetoed by public poll, unlike any other wards or constituencies proposed by councils;*
- (6) *affirms its commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including its obligation under the Local Government Act 2002 to improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes;*
- (7) *calls on the government to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all of its legislation, policies and practices;*
- (8) *notes that if Council decides to reaffirm its decision to establish a Māori ward, the government legislation change will force a binding poll in the 2025 election on the question of continuing to have a Māori ward in Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt; and*
- (9) *requests the Chief Executive to provide advice on the implications of Hutt City Council refusing to hold a referendum on Māori wards in conjunction with the 2025 triennial general election."*

The meeting adjourned at 5.23pm and resumed at 5.31pm

## 6. PITO ONE NAME CHANGE JOINT SUBMISSION

Report No. HCC2024/4/239 by the Senior Policy Advisor | Pou Tohutohu Kaupapa Here Matua-Māori

Speaking under public comment, **Vicki Hollywell, a representative of the Wellington Tenth Trust, the Palmerston North Māori Reserve Trust and the Ahu Whenua Trust Mana Whenua**, confirmed the Ahu Whenua Trust supported the correction of the spelling of Petone to Pito One. She noted that the misspelling was a historical error.

Speaking under public comment, **Te Karanga O Te Tui Marino, a representative of Hikoikoi Management and the Ahu Whenua Trust**, expressed support for the corrected spelling of Petone to Pito One to restore mana to the area. He mentioned that the misspelling was an error from the 1800s and saw this as an opportunity to correct history for future generations. He emphasised the importance of getting names right to avoid repeating mistakes.

Speaking under public comment, **Liz Mellish, a representative of the Wellington Tenth Trust, the Palmerston North Māori Reserve Trust and the Ahu Whenua Trust Mana Whenua**, emphasised the significance of changing the name from Petone to Pito One for the Māori community.

Speaking under public comment, **Pam Hanna, Sylvia Allen, and Barbara Scott** expressed support for a name change from Petone to Pito One, citing the need to correct the name.

Speaking under public comment, **Teira Jayde Rawiri, a student from Wainuiomata High School (Te Wharekura)**, believed that the name Petone represented a historical wrong. She asked Council to consider renaming Lower Hutt to 'Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai.' Teira explained that the name Te Awa Kairangi honoured the Māori mana and the unique character of the local environment.

Speaking under public comment, **Lillian Pak** expressed support for changing the name from Petone to Pito One. Lillian emphasised the importance of names in preserving cultural dignity.

Speaking under public comment, **Hakepa** expressed support for changing the name from Petone to Pito One.

Speaking under public comment, **Dina Awarau and Mere te Paki, representatives of the Hutt Union and Community Health Service (HUCS)**, expressed support for changing the name from Petone to Pito One.

The Senior Policy Advisor | Pou Tohutohu Kaupapa Here Matua-Māori elaborated on the report.

Members expressed support for the joint submission and highlighted the following points:

- the name change was important to correct a historical error.
- the name change was a way to restore and preserve the dignity and mana of the area and its name.
- the name Pito One reflected the rich history of the name and the value of the story. It was seen to begin learning the language and educating people, providing a window into Māori culture and a basis for more understanding.

**RESOLVED:** (UNANIMOUS) (Mayor Barry/Deputy Mayor Lewis) **Minute No. C 24403**

*"That Council:*

- (1) *notes that authority for changing suburb names sits with the Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa | The New Zealand Geographic Board;*
- (2) *notes that prior to Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa | The New Zealand Geographic Board making a decision on the proposal to change the suburb name "Petone" to "Pito One", it has sought public submissions by 10 September 2024;*
- (3) *notes the draft joint submission attached at Appendix 1 was developed in consultation with Mana Whenua;*
- (4) *agrees to endorse the joint submission; and*
- (5) *authorises the Mayor to make minor amendments and sign the letter on behalf of Council."*

## **7. PROPOSED NAME FOR NEW NAENAE POOL**

Report No. HCC2024/4/240 by the Director Neighbourhoods and Communities



The Director Neighbourhoods and Communities elaborated on the report.

In response to questions from members, the Director of Neighbourhoods and Communities advised that the proposed name for the new Naenae Pool would have a tagline 'Pool and Fitness Centre.'

Cr Mitchell noted that 'Te Ngaengae' was the original and correct name for the area. He acknowledged Council's Mana Whenua partners for gifting the name and sharing the story behind it. He mentioned that the community was now familiar with the story behind the name, which was reflected in murals, carvings, and the design of the new swimming pool.

**RESOLVED:** (UNANIMOUS) (Cr Mitchell/Cr Parkin)

**Minute No. C 24404**

*"That Council:*

- (1) *notes that the Mana Whenua Naming Committee has proposed Te Ngaengae as the name for the new Naenae Pool;*
- (2) *notes this has been supported by Council's Mana Whenua partners and by the community and;*
- (3) *approves Te Ngaengae as the name for the new Naenae Pool."*

## **8. AMENDMENTS TO HUTT CITY COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS - REMOTE PARTICIPATION**

Report No. HCC2024/4/241 by the Senior Democracy Advisor

The Senior Democracy Advisor elaborated on the report.

In response to a question from a member, the Senior Democracy Advisor advised that community boards would soon be able to attend their meetings remotely due to new live-streaming technology.

**RESOLVED:** (UNANIMOUS) (Mayor Barry/Cr Brown)

**Minute No. C 24405**

*"That Council:*

- (1) *receives and notes the report;*
- (2) *adopts amendments to Hutt City Council's Standing Orders that allow remote participation at Council meetings counting towards quorum attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and*
- (3) *notes the requirement to achieve the agreement of at least 75% of members present at a meeting to amend Standing Orders."*

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL FROM THE LONG TERM PLAN/ANNUAL PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 AUGUST 2024**

**RESOLVED:** (Mayor Barry/Deputy Mayor Lewis)

**Minute No. C 24406**

*"That Council adopts the recommendations made on the following reports and any amendments agreed at the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan Subcommittee meeting held on 26 August 2024:*

- (a) Draft Annual Plan 2025-26 initial direction setting;
- (b) Jackson Street Three Waters Renewals;
- (c) Three Waters Capital Carry-Overs;
- (d) Micromobility Programme; and
- (e) Proposed budget changes for 2024-25 and later years."

## 10. QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

## 11. CLOSING FORMALITIES - KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA

Unuhia!	<i>Release us from the supreme sacredness</i>
Unuhia!	<i>of our tasks</i>
Unuhia i te uru-tapu-nui	<i>To be clear and free</i>
Kia wātea, kia māmā	<i>in heart, body and soul in our continuing</i>
Te ngākau, te tinana, te wairua i te	<i>journey</i>
ara takatū	<i>Oh Rongo, raise these words up high</i>
Koia rā e Rongo whakairihia ake ki	<i>so that we be cleansed and be free,</i>
runga	<i>Yes indeed, we are free!</i>
Kia wātea, kia wātea!	<i>Good and peaceful</i>
Ae rā, kua wātea!	
Hau, pai mārire.	

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 5.45pm.

C Barry  
**MAYOR**

**CONFIRMED as a true and correct record**  
**Dated this 1st day of October 2024**

## **Wainuiomata Intermediate School submission to Hutt City Council on the vote on Māori Wards.**

The reason I feel compelled to submit on the upcoming vote is about integrity. Our localised curriculum at Wainuiomata Intermediate School is strongly grounded in issues of equity and social justice, themes that resonate with pre-adolescents who are beginning to find their identity and voice.

It also reflects our commitment to enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as required under the 2020 Education and Training Act. The purpose of the Act includes establishing and regulating “an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and supports Māori-Crown relationships.”

To not voice an objection to a proposal that undermines Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori – Crown relationships would, I believe, show a lack of integrity with the position we take as a school, encouraging our students to fight injustice and to champion equity.

My understanding of the Bill passed in Parliament is that for those councils which have put in place Māori wards since 2021, requires them by 6 September, to either rescind or disestablish that ward or have a referendum on retaining the ward at the next council election.

My understanding of what Māori Wards are, is that they work like Māori seats in parliament, but at a local government level; they’re a way for voters on the Māori electoral roll to be specifically represented on local councils. Just like many councils have seats assigned to geographic areas so those people can give that area a voice, Māori ward seats allow Māori to be democratically represented on council. Because the electoral rolls are the same as for national elections, Māori don’t have to vote for the Māori ward, and can choose which electoral roll to be on. Māori are underrepresented in local government, and creating the option to have Māori wards was one way to guarantee a baseline of representation.

The Local Electoral Act (2001) had already created the option for Māori wards, but the creation of a Māori ward could be challenged by a petition and if 5% of the council’s population signed, a binding referendum on whether or not to establish a Māori ward would have to be held.

While NZ First leader Winston Peters has said “We campaigned on Māori wards, that this democracy should be equal.” Even my Year 7 students know that equality and equity are very different.

The Waitangi Tribunal has released The Māori Wards and Constituencies Urgent Inquiry Report and they identified that the Government has inadequately defined the policy problem as restoring the right of the public to make decisions about Māori wards and constituencies, when no other type of ward or constituency requires a poll, in breach of the principle of equity.

In addition, the Tribunal finds that the Crown has failed to actively protect Māori rights and interests by ignoring the desires and actions of Māori for dedicated local representation, and it finds breaches of the principles of mutual benefit and options. Combined, these Treaty breaches operate to cause significant prejudice to Māori.

In the Hutt Valley, this council is currently undertaking a representation review. The representation review will look at the establishment of or whether we should continue with community boards or ward committees; the number of ward councillors there should be; the number of at-large councillors there should be; and, whether or not to have, or to continue having, a Māori ward.

Only one of the decisions that comes out of that review will be subject to a referendum.

Only one, and that's whether or not there is a Māori ward.

There is no referendum on whether or not they should remove wards altogether and have at-large councillors. No referendum on the topic of whether there should be community boards or ward committees. No referendum on the topic of how many wards there should be.

And for other councils undertaking review, there is no referendum on the topic of whether there should be a rural ward within their councils. None of those things is subject to a referendum.

The only thing that is subject to a referendum is whether there should be a Māori ward or not. That is discrimination. When Māori are being treated differently to non-Māori, it is discrimination.

For my own community in Wainuiomata, if they don't like the idea that their community board might be disestablished, they have no say. But if they don't like the idea of having a Māori ward they do get a say on that through the means of a referendum.

Māori are being singled out by this Government for discriminatory treatment.

It's important to note that it's not compulsory for councils to have Māori wards. If they decide as part of their representation reviews to have Māori wards, they should be able to do that, just as if they decide to have a rural ward, they should be able to do that as well.

It's also important to note that having a separate Māori ward confers no additional rights on Māori compared to non-Māori. Māori still only get the same number of votes as non-Māori.

52 mayors and chairs wrote to the Government opposing this change, stating, "Our position – a position that has been held by Local Government New Zealand since 2018 – is that Māori wards and constituencies should be treated like all other wards and that decisions should be made at the [local] council level. Polls aren't required on any other wards or constituencies, and requiring them will add increased costs to councils."

They added "The Government's decision to remove decision-making from councils by mandating that polls be run on Māori wards and constituencies is an overreach on local decision-making when current legislation already requires councils to seek community views".

By saying that a majority can vote on the rights of a minority, or that a majority can vote on indigenous rights, betrays a profound lack of understanding of basic democratic principles.

The proposed change is not democracy; it is the tyranny of the majority.

The reason many countries established a “Bill of Rights” is because it has been well understood for centuries in the formulations of democracies across the world that there was a very evident problem with democracy: the tyranny of the majority. It is not possible by a purely majority rule to protect minority interests, and, indeed, persecution of minorities becomes nearly inevitable if you allow that tyranny.

We have something exceptional in this country, even beyond the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act. We have a uniquely founding agreement that recognises the right to self-determination of tangata whenua Māori.

That is something we should be profoundly proud of.

Indeed, Te Tiriti o Waitangi – in the words of Moana Jackson, “is a profound and visionary base on which to build a country”.

If we are to uphold that founding agreement, we must listen to the means by which Māori wish to express their self-determination, and if that means as Māori wards, then we must listen to that.

That is the fulfilment of our agreement.

The twisting of logic to suggest that by nullifying Māori rights, we make us all the better; we make us somehow more equal, is a profound untruth and a poisonous and divisive idea.

These proposals will take Aotearoa backwards, back to the time when there were no Māori seats on councils. The reason that the legislation changed was because of the “tyranny of the majority”. Up until the year 2019, only one council had Māori seats.

More than fourteen councils wanted to establish Māori seats but because of the previous legislation, they couldn't do it.

Once the legislation changed so that councils would be able to establish Māori seats, the number of councils increased to 50. Fifty councils have Māori seats now. That is the difference of the law when it is used to support equity.

I ask this council to be good ancestors, and to uphold their obligations under a treaty that was signed to give non-Māori the right to live here, I go back to Matua Moana Jackson as I often do when I need profound wisdom with a Wainuiomata flavour, he said; “The Treaty to me has never been about Treaty rights, it’s always been about the rightness that comes from people accepting their obligations to each other. And that was a profound, and I think, visionary base upon which to build a country”.

Please consider how much better this city and this country is when everyone's voice is heard and respected. It will take bravery to oppose the pressure from this coalition government to disestablish your Māori wards.

I ask you to look at the benefits you have gained from them, the richness that has been enabled, be brave.

And on how to be brave I return again to Moana; "But to be courageous to me, is just the deep breath you take before you make a hard decision. And I am confident, certainly, that our people have that courage, and the Treaty challenge for others who make this land their home, is to find that courage as well".

Craig Sharp  
Kaihautu/Principal  
Wainuiomata Intermediate School