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**Asian Community Needs and Participation
in the New Zealand Local Democracy**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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Abstract

The increased cultural diversity of the New Zealand population has generated challenges for local government. Ethnic groups have different needs and expectations of the services local government provides. Section 37K of the Local Government Act (1974) states that local government has an important role in providing for the wellbeing of local communities. As local communities today increasingly consist of diverse ethnic groups, local government has the challenge of meeting community needs in more difficult social, economic and cultural areas. As well, the local government also has responsibilities to provide avenues to accommodate the input of these increasingly diverse groups.

The research presented in this dissertation examines (1) whether the needs of the Asian community are being met, and (2) what is the pattern of Asian participation in the local government democracy. Palmerston North City Council was used as a case study. A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect information from the resident Asian population. The findings of the research indicate that the majority of Asians felt their needs were being met. Though the overall assessment of the Council's services was positive, some people made suggestions on possible ways that the Council should improve its services to the Asian community. These suggestions include promoting cultural awareness, encouraging cultural activities, providing more English language classes and enhancing employment opportunities for new migrants.

The research also showed that the number of Asian people participating in the Council decision making processes is low. The survey results indicated that this is due to limited understanding of the participation process and lack of awareness of the opportunities the citizens have for participating in local affairs.

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