





HE WHAREMOA TE RAKAU, KA MAHUE.

Māori engagement with local government:  
knowledge, experiences, and  
recommendations.





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CHRISTINE M CHEYNE  
VERONICA M H TAWHAI

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School of People, Environment and Planning  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
New Zealand

Tel: 06 359-9099 ext 2816

Email: [C.M.Cheyne@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.M.Cheyne@massey.ac.nz)

*"If I knew there was an answer there,  
some hope there,  
yes I would."*

*He whāremoā te rakau, ka māhūe.  
A hollow tree is left behind.*

## ABSTRACT

This report presents the data, analysis and results of focus group research that explored Māori knowledge, experiences and perspectives of local government in Aotearoa New Zealand. Seven focus groups were held with different groups of Māori; 18 – 24 year olds in tertiary study; 18 – 24 year olds in the workforce; people 25 years old and over residing in rural areas, and people 25 years old and over living in urban settings. The purpose of this report is to present the research findings about the knowledge and experiences of Māori in relation to local government, and in particular, their recommendations for the development of the local government sector. It is intended to assist local authorities in their efforts to improve their engagement with Māori, and stimulate further research with Māori about Māori participation in local government decision-making.

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Ki a koutou ngā kaiwhakauru ki tēnei rangahau, nā ō koutou whakaaro, ō koutou kupu kōrero, tēnei kaupapa i whakatinana, i whakaora, i whakamana. To you, the research participants, by your thoughts, your words, this project was given form, life, and legitimacy. Kei te mihi ki a koutou.

No reira, tēnā tātou katoa.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Local Government Act 2002 has made local government much more important in people's lives, and has placed even greater emphasis on Māori participation and representation in local government. There is, however, little to no data about Māori engagement with local government. This includes data about Māori participation levels as voters and in other decision-making forums, and data about Māori knowledge, experiences and perspectives of local government.

Participation levels in decision-making forums, such as elections, are an important measure of legitimacy for democratic institutions, such as local authorities (Lijphart, 1997). The Treaty of Waitangi also guarantees Māori an equitable measure of local self-determination and authority in self-government. Local governments' efforts to secure full Māori participation and representation is therefore both important to upholding the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi and the legitimacy of local government democracy.

Māori also have a much more youthful population profile and will increasingly make up a larger proportion of new electors. The issues of participation and non-participation for Māori and, in particular, rangatahi Māori (Māori youth), must be addressed as a core part of the efforts for strengthening representative democracy in Aotearoa. Research by and with Māori on these issues will be essential to this effort, as data on Māori perspectives and recommendations will provide the direction for local governments' development.

### METHODOLOGY

Focus groups were employed to explore with Māori their knowledge, experiences and perspectives about local government. Seven focus groups were held with different groups of Māori; 18 – 24 year olds in tertiary study; 18 – 24 year olds in the workforce; people 25 years old and over residing in rural areas, and; people 25 years old and over living in urban settings.

Research about Māori has long been criticised as having failed to contribute to positive Māori development (Stokes, 1985; Teariki, *et. al.*, 1992). Focus groups were an appropriate method for research with Māori, as they allowed for observation of tikanga in the process of data collection, and through successive review hui ensured a high level of accountability to participants. The importance of accountability and high ethical standards in Māori research (Te Awakotuku, 1991; Durie, 1998; Smith, 1999) was central in this project. This included the central purpose of the research; to contribute to Māori development through the provision of data to local governments to (1) assist their efforts to secure full Māori participation in local decision-making, and (2) stimulate further research by local authorities with Māori in their respective areas, such as mana whenua, about Māori participation and engagement.

Arising out of the focus group process were several principles that were seen as particularly important to our participants (Māori, young people) and the nature of the issues under

discussion (some being controversial). These include; 'whakawhiti whakaaro - the free exchange of thoughts'; 'kia māmā te korero - let the discussion be light'; 'hatakihi - hardcase!'; 'ngā āwangawanga - hearing the concerns'; 'he tangata, he mātauranga - every person has knowledge, has experience', and; 'manaakitanga - respect and care'. Discussion from participants affirmed focus groups conducted with these principles as both a successful method for research with Māori and as a potential forum for dialogue and information sharing between local governments and Māori.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings focused on three areas; participants' knowledge of local government, based on information received by them and their own experiences; participants' perspectives about Māori issues, participation in, and engagement by local government, and; participants' recommendations for the development of the local government sector. The key findings of this research were;

### **- KNOWLEDGE**

#### **1. Knowledge about Local Government**

- 1.1 Participants had some knowledge of past and current representatives, including the current mayor, but low-level awareness of current councillors.
- 1.2 Participants had high-level knowledge of local government responsibilities, but low-level knowledge of local government structures, i.e. "who to contact for what".
- 1.3 There is generally confusion around both enrolling to vote and voting; how, where (electoral area), and when.
- 1.4 Low-level knowledge of other avenues to participate is a factor in citizens' low-level participation in local government.

#### **2. Information from and about Local Government**

- 2.1 Information is hard to obtain, and when obtained, is not considered user-friendly (including candidate profiles).
- 2.2 Low-level awareness and interest in local governments is partly caused by the lack of coverage in popular media, such as radio and television.
- 2.3 The lack of good information is a factor in Māori perception of local government as irrelevant, and contributes to overall frustration in local government matters.
- 2.4 The shortage of information, low-level visibility, and the subsequent perceived low-level relevance of local government, is a primary cause of Māori low-level participation and non-participation in local government.

#### **3. Contact with Local Government**

- 3.1 Most participants had had contact with local governments and authorities over general council issues, such as water.
- 3.2 Māori are positive about what services local government has to offer, but are discouraged by poor provision of those services and seemingly difficult processes.

- 3.3 Māori feel positive and encouraged by representatives with high-level visibility in their communities, and who are easily accessible to citizens.
- 3.4 Levels of contact with representatives effect Māori interest and motivation to participate (i.e. low-level contact = low-level interest).
- 3.5 In particular, a lack of familiarity with candidates is a key factor in Māori abstention from or feelings of meaningless voting.

## - PERSPECTIVES

### 4. Representation of Māori concerns

- 4.1 Participants felt there is little opportunity for Māori representation or consideration of Māori issues in local government, and where there is, it is often tokenistic.
- 4.2 Participants felt there is little room given for incorporation of tikanga and Māori processes in local government, and when there is, it is often tokenistic.
- 4.3 Due to a lack of support, Māori express a concern that representation by Māori is dangerous (in terms of wellbeing) for those who choose those roles.
- 4.4 Participants feel Māori representation in local government is essential; however, express that being of Māori ethnicity is not qualification enough to be a representative.
- 4.5 Rather participants emphasised that all representatives, including non-Māori, should commit to 'kaupapa Māori'<sup>1</sup>; Māori issues and ways of doing things (including tikanga).
- 4.6 Māori participation is affected by a sense of belonging, i.e. primarily people are interested in participating in their homeland / tribal area, which might be in another electorate.
- 4.7 Some Māori consequently do not participate in their local government as they feel it is the sole business of mana whenua, whereas others participate to purposively support mana whenua.

### 5. Participation by Māori

- 5.1 Māori consider citizenship rights, such as voting and other ways to participate, as important.
- 5.2 However, there is a major lack of confidence, trust and faith in local governments, which causes Māori non-participation.
- 5.3 Participants feel it is not made easy for the 'everyday person' to access or participate in local government; especially people who have busy lifestyles with work and families.
- 5.4 Participants' awareness of others' unsuccessful attempts to engage with local government is a deterrent to their participation.
- 5.5 Local governments would be accessed by Māori if Māori believed local government would be helpful, their participation was valued, and engagement would result in a positive outcome.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Kaupapa Māori as it was referred to by participants – it may embody different principles in other contexts, for example, in Māori education (see Smith, 1992, *Kaupapa Māori as Resistance and Intervention*).



## **6. Engagement of Māori (by local government)**

- 6.1 Māori feel consultation is not genuine, but 'after the fact', i.e. after the real decision-making has occurred.
- 6.2 What contributions are made by Māori through consultation, participants feel are then undervalued.
- 6.3 Participants feel that any interest in engaging Māori is only expressed during election time, with representatives showing no accountability or effort to communicate with or engage citizens once elected.
- 6.3 There is a frustration that the onus is on citizens to participate, rather than local governments to engage citizens.
- 6.4 There is a concern that local governments prioritise funding, rather than communities, and are therefore interested in those with resources, such as employers, instead of meeting the needs of the average and poorer communities (especially low socio-economic Māori communities).
- 6.5 Central government has different affects on Māori interest in local government; on one hand, the lack of responsiveness to national Māori issues causes disinterest in local government; on the other, central and local government are viewed separately, including who has jurisdiction over what Treaty issues.
- 6.6 For other participants, both local and central government are intrinsically linked; an entire system that needs to become more representative and accountable in its engagement of Māori and all citizens generally.

## **- RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7. Improving the information flow**

- 7.1 There is a need for increased media coverage to reach a wider Māori audience, including radio and television.
- 7.2 An increased use of technology will be more successful in reaching and communicating effectively with a wider Māori audience; the internet, use of cell phones, CD roms and DVD's.
- 7.3 Appropriate forums for providing information to a wider audience of Māori can be ascertained by accessing community timetables and identifying opportunities to talk to citizens, such as workforce meetings and hui.
- 7.4 Information must be interesting and relevant to different groups of Māori (young, working).
- 7.5 Suitably trained front-line / first contact people and liaison officers in local government are essential in providing information and services in a manner that will encourage Māori to make further contact.

### **8. Enhancing Māori participation**

- 8.1 The visibility and accessibility of local governments must be enhanced to foster Māori participation, including the establishment of offices in the community with scheduled after-hours and weekend times.

- 8.2 The visibility and accessibility of local government representatives can be enhanced through greater attendance at community events.
- 8.3 Holding local government events, such as consultation hui, at marae and other local venues will assist in capturing Māori interest and encouraging Māori participation.
- 8.4 Avenues for participation should take into account Māori diverse lifestyles and preferences, such as the use of technology (email, texting, web-based interaction).
- 8.5 Incentives and other measures to increase participation should be considered, as Māori are unsure and sceptical of how they or their communities will benefit from participating.

## 9. Improving engagement of Māori (by Local Government)

- 9.1 Greater representation of Māori at all levels of local government will improve local government attempts to engage Māori, through a perceived higher-level of accountability and responsiveness to Māori and Māori concerns.
- 9.2 Again, all representatives, Māori and non-Māori, should be concerned with and make an effort to advance 'kaupapa Māori', and engage themselves with Māori over Māori issues.
- 9.3 A real commitment to the tikanga of mana whenua would both help local government appropriately engage with Māori, and increase Māori respect for local government.
- 9.4 Major structural change in local government is needed to successfully engage Māori and secure their full confidence, trust, faith, and thereby participation, in local government decision-making. This includes restructuring for greater power-sharing with Māori in decision-making processes.
- 9.5 Efforts for structural change and greater power-sharing in local government are considered by Māori as both a Treaty of Waitangi issues and an issue of democracy.

## 10. Improving accountability to Māori

- 10.1 Māori are concerned with how they can hold local government accountable, are unaware and frustrated about how they can do so, and are interested in the development of accountability measures such as 'snap elections' and calls of 'no confidence'.
- 10.2 Local governments' representatives must develop effective communication networks with their respective Māori communities, so they can properly represent and be held accountable to those communities and their issues.
- 10.3 Regular, ongoing meetings with mana whenua are recommended to ensure accountability to mana whenua, mana whenua tikanga and processes, as well as mana whenua issues, needs, concerns and aspirations.
- 10.4 Other initiatives that engage citizens one-on-one, such as door to door surveys, was also viewed favourable by Māori with regards to increasing peoples sense of local governments connection and accountability to citizens.

The findings also highlighted different perspectives and recommendations from the different participant groups; Māori in urban areas, Māori in rural areas, rangatahi Māori in the workforce, and rangatahi Māori in tertiary education.

## **11. Urban Māori**

- 11.1 Urban Māori emphasised that the efforts of representatives to connect with their communities must be genuine and sincere, i.e. “no suits at the rugby games please”.
- 11.2 Once elected, representatives must show accountability to their communities by not only staying in touch, but leading community development initiatives.
- 11.3 Representatives’ involvement and familiarity with their communities should ensure community development is based on community needs, aspirations, and utilises their skills and strengths.

## **12. Rural Māori**

- 12.1 Participants from rural areas were generally happier with their local government, because of the closer connection felt with its representatives and workers.
- 12.2 Rural participants were generally more interested in local government, and reported higher levels of confidence and trust in local government representatives and services.
- 12.3 These factors contributed to the higher levels of participation and willingness to be engaged amongst participants residing in rural areas.

## **13. Young Māori workers**

- 13.1 Young Māori in the workforce stressed a need for younger representatives in local government, to reflect young citizens in our communities.
- 13.2 Representatives should be from diverse (socio-economic, cultural) backgrounds, to better reflect the diversity of citizens in our communities.
- 13.3 Representation of young workers issues through representatives who they can relate and connect to will improve the approachability and accessibility of local government to young Māori.
- 13.4 Initiatives such as greater use of technology to provide greater options for participation will improve the interest and participation of young Māori workers in local government.

## **14. Young Māori students**

- 14.1 Tertiary education was felt by young Māori students to positively increase their exposure to and interest and confidence in participation in political issues and systems, such as local government.
- 14.2 This however also caused young Māori students concern for their peers not in tertiary education, and raised suggestions for a public education programme to ensure all young people could develop knowledge of how to access and participate in local government.
- 14.3 Young Māori students made it clear they would participate more if local government made it clearer their participation was important and valued.

14.4 Initiatives such as the employment of Māori and youth liaison officers will improve young Māori sense of local government as approachable and accessible.

## KEY MESSAGES

The key messages for local government, arising out the focus group discussions with our research participants (Māori in urban areas, Māori in rural areas, young Māori in the workforce, and young Māori in tertiary education), are;

**1. Information flow: "knowledge is power"**

**2. Engagement: "diversity is the key"**

**3. Accountability: "integrity is everything"**

These are messages for those who are tasked with enhancing Māori representation and participation in local government. This includes policy-makers and decision-makers in central and local government, the Electoral Commission, local government managers and local authority elected representatives. This means that the dominant Pākehā majority must look at ways of doing things differently, and stepping outside of established ways of engaging Māori and in particular rangatahi Māori. Māori recognise the opportunities and benefits associated with participation in local politics, but are unlikely to become involved if local governments are not more concerned with Māori communities and their issues. Māori have high-level knowledge of politics and political issues, and will readily receive information about local government and engage in formal political processes if their perspectives, styles of communication, needs and aspirations are genuinely responded to.

Just as participants of this research expressed scepticism towards local governments' engagement of Māori, they were similarly sceptical of any positive effects this report would have on local governments for Māori. Lack of political will in the past to advance Māori local political self-determination within local government structures has stifled Māori participation. This holds true today. Seeking full Māori participation and the changes required to secure such participation must be re-conceptualised as an effort for enhancing social justice and the democratic legitimacy of our local body institutions. In this way, local governments can be leaders in creating a better future with Māori, for all New Zealanders, in Aotearoa.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

*He aha te mea nui o te ao? Māku e kii atu: he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.  
What is the thing of greatest importance in the world? I say: it is people, it is people, it is people.*

This report presents the results of focus group research that explored Māori knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of local government in Aotearoa New Zealand. The purpose of this report is to document the aspirations and recommendations of Māori for development of the local government sector, to help inform local authorities' efforts to enhance Māori participation.

An important aspect of any research is to ensure the findings reach 'end-users' - those who can use and apply the findings in their everyday work, lives, and in their dealings with local government. End-users of this research may be local authority staff, particularly those involved in engaging citizens and making recommendations about electoral matters; elected representatives, all of whom represent and should engage Māori; government agencies that have responsibilities for promoting local political participation; Local Government New Zealand, as the peak body for the local government sector; central government agencies with responsibilities in relation to voting and public participation (in particular, the Electoral Commission and the Department of Internal Affairs); hapū / iwi / Māori collectives addressing issues of participation, such as rūnanga, and; researchers and others interested in Māori political participation in general, and local political participation in particular.

Local government in New Zealand comprises two main types of authorities: regional councils and territorial authorities (city / district councils)<sup>2</sup>. The general term used in political science for referring to people's involvement in local government decision-making is 'local political participation'. Chapter 2 of this report gives some background information about trends in local political participation and the issues that arise from these trends.

Chapter 3 outlines what existing research tells us. This highlights gaps in what we know about people's knowledge and experiences in relation to voting and other activities (such as making submissions and having input into decision-making).

Focus groups involve a group of people having a structured discussion on a topic. They are an appropriate form of research with Māori, providing kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) interaction and scope for tikanga, such as manaakitanga (respect and care) of participants. Focus groups were held to explore with Māori what they know and think about local government, including participation and non-participation in voting and other avenues of citizen engagement. Although the focus groups were facilitated following a common format, the structure was not rigid and allowed participants to engage with one another. Chapter 4 explains how the focus groups were set up and conducted.

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<sup>2</sup> There is also a sub-local tier of local government, namely, community boards. Community boards are not mandatory. At the 2004 elections there were 144 community boards (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006, p. 104).

Chapter 5 details our findings. A key purpose of this report is to let the voices of participants be heard by the various end-users of this research. Quotes of the participants are highlighted throughout the findings so that their words are paramount in the messages this research gives. The selection of quotes was guided by a desire to reflect the richness and range of views.

Chapter 6 then outlines some key messages from the research about addressing and enhancing Māori local political participation. These messages include recommendations from participants for the development of the local government sector. These recommendations focus on information flow, engagement, and accountability.

“He whāremoā te rakau, kā māhūe (a hollow tree is left behind)” is a whākātāuki (proverb) discussed by participants in the review stages of this research. It emphasises the key findings of the research, which connects Māori perceptions of local governments ‘substance’ and ‘worth’ to their levels of participation in local government. The ‘substance’ and ‘worth’ of local government is discussed in this report in terms of information, local government’s efforts to engage Māori, and their accountability to Māori communities. This affects Māori participation levels in local government through both their ‘know-how’ *and* their desire to participate. The key messages in this report subsequently emphasise the second whākātāuki drawn upon in this research to highlight to local governments the importance of securing full Māori participation: He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.



## 2. BACKGROUND

Research on local political participation in Aotearoa has been both scant and uneven<sup>3</sup>, and in particular has neglected to explore the perspectives and experiences of Māori and young people. While we have some information about political participation in national-level politics, we know much less about local political participation. Existing data reveals numerous limitations, including:

- Voter turnout data for local authority elections do not have ethnicity breakdowns (see Department of Internal Affairs, 2005).
- Voter turnout data for local authority elections do not provide any information on reasons for abstention from voting (ibid).
- Existing research on other forms of political participation is small-scale and less generalisable. Where there is quantitative data (for example, Forgie, 2002), this is generally focused on participation rather than non-participation.

Published data on voter turnout in New Zealand local elections presents data disaggregated by type of authority (urban / rural / mixed), type of franchise (ratepayer / non-ratepayer), number of candidates per position, and by numerical size of electorate. There is some data disaggregated by age, gender, and length of residence (see Local Government New Zealand, 2002). However, neither the Department of Internal Affairs triennial election statistics, nor the 2001 surveys carried out by a few local authorities (Local Government New Zealand, 2002) provided any data on ethnicity.

At the same time, the Local Government Act 2002 has made local government much more important in people's lives, and has placed even greater emphasis on Māori participation and representation in local government. Research by and with Māori on these issues will be essential if the objectives of the 2002 Act are to be realised. In particular, data on Māori perspectives, aspirations, and recommendations for local government will provide direction on how local government can develop to better engage with Māori.

### ***The Project: New Zealanders' Knowledge About and Interaction With Local Government***

This research on Māori and Local Government was undertaken as part of a larger project that explored New Zealanders' knowledge about and interaction with local government. The primary focus of the project was the formal political system of local government<sup>4</sup>. Both voting and other forms of political participation were included. The data collection incorporated a telephone survey of 400 voters in one region of New Zealand, focus groups with Māori, and focus groups with non-Māori young people of voting age (18–24 years). The survey was conducted in August 2004 and the focus groups were carried out during 2004 and 2005, with follow-up hui in 2006.

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<sup>3</sup> By contrast, there has been a substantial investment of public funds in research on parliamentary elections, particularly in the 1990s as Aotearoa adopted the MMP electoral system for parliamentary elections (see, for example, Vowles, *et al.*, 1995, 1998, 2002, and 2004; Boston, *et al.*, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> It is beyond the scope of the research to encompass the wider arena of 'local democracy' that would also include other political activity (for example, involvement in public protests and signing petitions).

The project was supported by a grant from the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund. The purpose of the fund is to support research that builds new knowledge. The particular aim of the project was to look at the issues associated to age and ethnicity with regards to local government participation, but it also filled some of the gaps in our understanding of what is happening overall to local political participation. An issue that remains poorly understood is the meaning and significance of non-voting in local elections. Thus, another specific objective of the research was to gather data on non-participation. Whether it takes the form of abstention from voting or non-participation in other processes, non-participation presents a dilemma. It is unclear whether it reflects contentment or consent, apathy or alienation, or other factors (such as confusion or lack of knowledge about how to vote and what local government does).

Attention to the political behaviour of Māori is particularly important, not only because Māori are tangata whenua (the indigenous people of Aotearoa), but because Māori have a much more youthful population profile, and are over-represented in many measures of social exclusion (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). Research is important to gather data to address the issues of participation and non-participation for Māori and the growing population of rangatahi Māori (Māori youth).

### **Focus Groups with Māori**

Focus groups were conducted because of the tendency for Māori and young people to be under-represented in conventional research techniques, such as survey research. Young people are also under-represented in telephone surveys that use landline phone numbers, as they are more likely to rely on mobile phones.

For Māori, there is a cultural value placed on kanohi-kitea; face-to-face communication and the development of familiarity between participants and the researchers (Smith, 1999, p. 2; see also Stokes, 1985, p. 40). Therefore, Māori are less likely to provide detailed information over the phone or in a postal survey, and to someone with whom they have had no previous contact. As a result of discussions with Māori researchers and a professional survey researcher, it was therefore decided not to include a Māori booster sample for the telephone survey<sup>5</sup>. Instead, it was considered sufficient for the purposes of the project to accept whatever proportions of Māori fell out of the sampling procedures, and to employ data gathering techniques that provide for a more culturally appropriate interaction between Māori participants and researchers. Focus groups fulfil this role, providing the circumstances in which research can be conducted according to tikanga Māori.

### **Māori engagement with local government: knowledge, experiences and recommendations.**

Thus, as a part of the wider Marsden project, this research, focusing on Māori knowledge, experiences and recommendations for local government, was embarked upon. It seeks to provide information on some of the questions unanswered by current data, and provide some pointers to local government in their future efforts to improve engagement with Māori and rangatahi Māori.

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<sup>5</sup> A booster sample would be a reasonably standard approach, when it is considered vital for a survey to address under-representation of a certain group.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relevant to this research included information and discussions about Māori political participation; research on current electoral participation, in particular voter turnout in local government elections, and; literature about improving political engagement.

#### 3.1 MĀORI POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The literature on Māori political participation revolves largely around two areas: (1) the importance of enhancing representative democracy in New Zealand, including Māori representation, as highlighted by the provisions of the Local Government Act 2002, and; (2) Māori local political self-determination and the Treaty of Waitangi.

##### **Representative democracy**

Increasingly, in Aotearoa and other jurisdictions, there is concern about the implications of low and declining voter turnout in both parliamentary and local elections. Low voter turnout is seen as undermining the legitimacy of representative democracy, and indeed the health of democracy (Lijphart, 1997). Turnout in local elections in Aotearoa is consistently lower than that for parliamentary elections, which heightens concern about the vitality of local democracy (Department of Internal Affairs, 2005). Arresting low and declining voter turnout is linked to enhancing the legitimacy of local authority decision-making (see, for example, Rallings and Thrasher, 1996, 1999; Rallings, Thrasher and Downe, 2000; Local Government New Zealand, 2002, 2004; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002).

Thus, public participation is an essential component of enhanced legitimacy in democratic institutions. Participation levels in elections are therefore a key measure of legitimacy and representativeness for local authorities. With some evidence of declining voter turnout in local elections, a Select Committee Inquiry was conducted in both 2001 and 2004 to examine the trends in voter turnout and the implications of low voter turnout. The decline was perceived as significant, and was interpreted as declining confidence and / or interest in local government.

A review of local government legislation, following the election of a Labour-led government in 2000, resulted in the new Local Electoral 2001 and Local Government Act 2002. The Local Electoral Act introduced improvements to the electoral system, such as the option to use the Single Transferable Voting (STV) system and strengthened planning, consultation and reporting processes in local government. The STV system is argued as having the potential to secure greater representation for minority groups, and therefore may lead to greater representation of Māori (Sullivan, 2003).

The Local Government Act 2002 includes specific requirements for local authorities to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to and participate in local authority decision-making processes. According to section 81 of the 2002 Act, a local authority must:

- (a) establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority and;
- (b) consider ways in which it may foster the development of Māori capacity to contribute to the decision-making processes of the local authority, and;
- (c) provide relevant information to Māori for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b).

In addition to these provisions, the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (Māori Constituency Empowering) Act 2001 introduced Māori wards and constituency seats for their region (Hayward, 2003). The development of guaranteed Māori representation at the local level is strengthening the debates around improving representative democracy in Aotearoa. In particular, Sullivan (2003, p. 140) has argued that “collective identity and representation of collectives is also a valid interpretation of democratic representation”. These debates highlight key challenges and opportunities for the way the system of local government can promote full representation and participation by Māori.

### **The Treaty of Waitangi**

Since the introduction of Westminster-style government in Aotearoa, provisions for Māori local political self-determination within that system have been under constant change. This change has occurred as different political arrangements for Māori self-determination have been trialled, implemented, amended and further debated.

The first substantial electoral law of New Zealand, the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, provided in section 71 for continued autonomous iwi and hapū self-determination through the proclamation of districts under Māori self-control (Sorrenson, 1986). This was further supported in the Act through prohibition of Parliaments involvement in Māori affairs, including the passing of laws about Māori land (Richie and Hoffman, 1986). Subsequent policy for Pākehā settlement, however, resulted in both legislation to facilitate mass acquisition of Māori land (see Walker 1990), and the quashing of Māori proclamations of autonomy (see Belich, 1998) to counteract Māori resistance against further land alienation. Rikys (2004, p. 15) argues that subsequent Treaty of Waitangi violations by local governments have included; unfair rating and valuing of Māori land; allocation of ‘waste-lands’; excessive surveying and settlement of Māori land for reserves and public works; the decimation of Māori land and water resources through pollution from waste and other hazards, and; disregard of other Māori resources values, such as protection of ‘wahi tapu’ (sacred and restricted places).

In an effort to preserve authority over their own affairs, and counteract the damage to tribal resources, Māori have sought to secure a measure of political self-determination through government structures. This has led to the development of entities to continue a level of autonomous local Māori / iwi authority<sup>6</sup>, as well as provisions for representation and decision-making authority within local government itself. Two reports, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System (1986) and the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988), helped make explicit the connection between the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori presence and authority in decision-making processes. In particular, both reports emphasised the need for electoral reform to seek alternative arrangements to better serve the political self-determination guaranteed to Māori in the Treaty of Waitangi.

As part of the local government reforms begun in the late 1980s, suggestions from the Māori Local Government Reform Consultative Group (MCG) included Māori constituencies, Māori

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the establishment of Māori Councils in the Māori Councils Act 1900, Māori Health Councils in the Health Act 1920, and Māori Tribal Committees and Executives in the Māori Social and Economic Advancement Act 1945 (see Māori Affairs Department, 1952); legislation establishing individual iwi Runanga, as provided for in the Runanga Iwi Act 1990 (and Repeal Act 1991) (see Clark, 2003), and; the proposed introduction of Waka Umanga (see Law Commission, 2006).

Standing Committees, and fifty-fifty mana whenua (local iwi) representation on local authorities (see Hayward, 2003, pp. 7–8). Many of these recommendations were rejected by the Officials Coordinating Committee on Local Government on the basis they were undemocratic. It was argued by local political commentators, such as Cheyne (1989, p. 18), that “were it not for the Treaty there would be no legitimate expression of the Westminster form of government”. Nonetheless, none of these recommendations were taken up.

Despite rejection of the MCG’s recommendations, on the fringes of these reforms a greater level of Māori local self-determination was introduced in the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The Act, in Part II, requires local authorities to provide for the relationship of Māori to their resources, to have regard for kaitiakitanga (Māori traditional exercise of guardianship), and to account for the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (see Love, 2003, p. 34). The RMA gave a new priority to the relationship between Māori and local government. Implementation of the Act, however, has highlighted several problems and ambiguities around that relationship. During the 1990s there was a raft of reports which sought to address the deficiencies in the ways Māori were able to participate in environmental decision-making, particularly at the local level (Barnes & Associates, 2001; James, *et. al.*, 2002; Local Government New Zealand, 1999; Ministry for the Environment, 1998; Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 1995, 1992)

In the legislative review in 2000–2001 consideration was given to; improving the effectiveness of local government for Māori; enhancing Māori participation in local government; accountability mechanisms to ensure effective Māori participation, and; greater clarity about the relationship between local government and the Treaty of Waitangi (Hayward, 2003, p. 17). As noted above, section 81 of the Local Government Act 2002 provides for Māori contributions to local government decision-making processes. This, along with Māori seats at local government level, is another significant development in the understanding of and provisions for power-sharing envisaged in the Treaty of Waitangi.

### **3.2 LOCAL-LEVEL ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION**

Understanding and improving Māori local political participation is a key component of enhancing Maori contributions to local government decision-making processes. In particular, there is a need to explore the factors underpinning Māori participation and non-participation in local government processes, including elections.

#### **Voter turnout in local government elections**

Whole-of-council elections take place for both regional councils and territorial authorities at the same time every three years. Postal voting was made mandatory in 1989. Although it then became optional for the 1992 election and subsequent elections, postal voting continues to be used by all local authorities. The last local authority elections took place in October 2004 and the next elections are in October 2007. The Department of Internal Affairs publishes data on voter turnout in local elections following each election. These official statistics present data disaggregated by type of authority (regional / urban / rural / mixed / North Island, South Island), type of franchise (ratepayer / non-ratepayer), number of candidates per position, and by numerical size of electorate. No overall turnout figure is published; instead turnout is presented for regional council elections, city council elections, city mayoralty elections, district council elections, district mayoralty elections, community board elections and some other

local bodies. Table 1 following provides an overall turnout figure for territorial authorities (city/district councils) and regional council elections<sup>7</sup>.

**Table 1: Voter Turnout in Local and National Elections.**

	Local Elections %	National Elections %
1989-90	58.4	85.2
1992-93	54	85.2
1995-96	52.8	88.3
1998-99	55	84.8
2001-02	50.4	76.9
2004-05	50.0	80.9

Source: Department of Internal Affairs (2003), Electoral Commission (2003, 2006), Justice and Electoral Committee (2005).

Other than turnout figures disaggregated by type of local authority and by roll (resident / ratepayer), The official statistics published by the Department of Internal Affairs do not provide any information about non-voting. However, voter registration figures indicate that non-registration in New Zealand is not evenly spread across age and ethnic groups. This can be ascertained by collating information from returned enrolment packs and also from the numbers of 18-24 olds who are not registered.

To begin to fill the gap in information about non-voting, five local authorities conducted surveys for the first time immediately following the 2001 local elections (Local Government New Zealand, 2002). The data has some disaggregation (for example, by age, gender and length of residence). The survey's findings highlight the low turnout by younger people, but do not provide any insight into Māori voter turnout as no ethnicity data was collected. The report did identify the need for further exploration of the assumptions about the implications of low voter turnout, concluding that none of the existing data:

. . . remotely penetrates the black hole of voter / non-voter motivation. (Local Government New Zealand, 2002, p. i)

A key goal of the Labour-led government is to improve well-being as measured in an annual scorecard, *The Social Report*. Acknowledging the importance of self-government as a key component of well-being, the 2005 report states:

Well-being depends on people having a sense of choice or control over their lives and on being reasonably able to do the things they value, all of which are impossible without the exercise of [economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights]. People's ability to take part in society, and their sense of belonging and identity, also depend on the exercise of these rights. (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p. 72)

The *Social Report* uses voter turnout figures as one of four indicators of civil and political rights. These rights are one of several dimensions of social well-being (Ministry of Social

<sup>7</sup> Note for Table 1: Turnout in local elections is defined as both resident and ratepayer electors who voted as a proportion of all residents and ratepayers on the electoral roll. Turnout in national elections is defined as the number voting as a percentage of those on the electoral roll.

Development, 2005). For voter turnout in local elections, the *Social Report* uses 2001 data, which, as the table above shows, reveal a decline in voter turnout. As a result, a deterioration in this aspect of well-being is reported. Of greater concern, the data on voter turnout and other aspects of confidence in the nation's political institutions provides no clear measure of this aspect of well-being for groups such as young people and Māori.

### **Māori participation at local government level**

The review of the existing literature reveals a gaping hole in data about participation by Māori at local government level. This includes statistical accounts such as voter turnout, or any comprehensive data about Māori knowledge, experiences or perspectives about participation in local government, such as confidence in local authorities. Overall, little is known about people's knowledge and involvement in local authorities and other sub-local units (for example, wards). There is some local authority-specific data on political knowledge collected by local authorities in annual resident surveys, however, these surveys typically focus on customer satisfaction with democratic services (for example, National Research Bureau, 2002).

Other local authority-specific data includes the Big Cities Project (North Shore City Council, *et al.*, 2003) which, although has recently been extended to encompass the eight largest cities<sup>8</sup>, does not cover the population in the majority of local authorities (small, urban, mixed and rural councils). This study has produced some data on democracy indicators for the large metropolitan local authorities, however, ethnic breakdowns are not published, so there is no indication as to Māori local-level participation. Moreover, because these local authorities are not representative of the range of different authorities in New Zealand, there are limitations in generalising from them to smaller local authorities. For example, some local authorities with a high proportion of the population being Māori are far from the metropolitan areas. Wellington City Council (a metropolitan authority in New Zealand's capital city) has carried out focus group research in May 2001 as part of an initiative to identify strategies for increasing turnout in the October 2001 local elections, but this kind of research to date has been very rare and was an isolated initiative.

Supplementing the existing data on political knowledge and political participation that is available through official local election statistics and local authority-specific studies, there is some data that was collected as part of the New Zealand Values Survey carried out in 1998 (van Aalst and Associates, 1999). As the title of the survey suggests, this data is on values and not on behaviour or knowledge. Research by Local Government New Zealand in 2002 provided, for the first time, data on voting by age group. This report of data, gathered in surveys in five territorial local authorities following the 2001 elections, noted:

Truly alarming is verification of a hitherto subjective impression that the young were distinctly less interested in local government and hence less likely to vote (Local Government New Zealand, 2002, p. iii).

Coupled with the lack of information on current Māori electoral turnout, this is of growing concern. Māori have a much more youthful population profile, as shown by the 2006 Census, and will increasingly make up a larger proportion of new electors. The issues of participation

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<sup>8</sup> Initially, this covered the six largest cities.

and non-participation for Māori and, in particular, rangatahi Māori, must be addressed as a core part of the efforts for strengthening representative democracy in Aotearoa. Information about those factors will be the basis upon which local governments can form their strategies for better engagement of Māori and Māori youth.

### 3.3 IMPROVING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

A review by Alliston and Cossar (2006) of literature, information and research produced by and for New Zealand government departments about the participation and engagement of Māori in their decision-making processes expressed similar limitations to the material cited above. They note:

While a significant amount of literature was provided by agencies on approaches to addressing low engagement and participation, there is very little produced by these groups that address the questions of *why* levels of participation are lower than desired. (ibid, p. 9)

In addition, Alliston and Cossar (ibid, p. 10) state that the review of literature does not encompass "all that Māori think and feel about democracy, representation, participation, and consultation". While it is undoubtedly positive that a wide range of initiatives are being tested to improve local government engagement of Māori, Māori knowledge, experiences, and perspectives will be at the core of their participation. In order to further develop and implement initiatives that will be *successful* in engaging full Māori participation at the local level, these areas must be explored.

#### **Māori knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.**

Historically, provisions for Māori local political self-determination have depended largely on the political will of those in local government. A general lack of political will to foster Māori local political self-determination and self-government within local structures has meant that Māori interests have been excluded and ignored. As illustrated above, the relationship between Māori and local government, like that between Māori and central government, is undermined by historical injustices, particularly in relation to land (see, for example, Rikys, 2001). Consequently, current Māori non-participation and supposed 'non-interest' in local government also is likely to reflect a lack of confidence in the local government system.

As stated earlier, participation is an essential component of enhanced political legitimacy in democratic society. Engagement of Māori by local government to secure full Māori participation is therefore both a requirement in upholding the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi, and essential for local governments' legitimacy as democratic institutions. The efforts of local governments to secure full Māori participation, therefore, are an important point for reflection and development.

In summary, there are major gaps in our knowledge about Māori political participation at the local government level. This includes not only quantitative data on Māori voter turn-out, but also more qualitative data about the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of Māori with regard to their participation in local government. Research with Māori about these issues is therefore vital to inform local governments efforts to engage Māori. The following section describes the methodology employed in this research.



## 4. METHODOLOGY

Important to the methodology of this research was the use of focus groups, the technique used in those groups, the way data was analysed, and critical reflection on the effectiveness of this technique with both Māori participants and in addressing the nature of the research questions.

### 4.1 THE USE OF A FOCUS GROUP METHOD

Earlier, there was a brief discussion about the aspects of focus group research that reinforce the suitability of this particular method of data collection for research with Māori. A more in-depth discussion follows here.

#### Focus groups and Māori

Focus groups were deemed an appropriate method for research with Māori for several reasons. First, face-to-face engagement with participants in a group setting allows for observation of tikanga (Māori protocols) in the process of data collection. Smith (1999, p. 120) cites several tikanga / principles of conduct for research with Māori; Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people); Kānohi kitea (the seen face); Titiro, whakarongo. . . korero (look, listen. . . speak); Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous); Kia tupato (be cautious); Kāua e takahi te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people), and; Kāua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge). The focus group process allowed for observation of such tikanga, in particular by enabling the researchers to connect with participants, to show respect and care for them, and provide a space for them to share their stories and perspectives, which the researchers in turn would listen, learn from and respect.

Second, as part of the focus group process, the use of feedback and review hui ensured a degree of accountability to the participants. Research with Māori has been widely criticised as having little to no positive effects for the participants, or, indeed, a negative effect by merely highlighting negative statistics about Māori; either way, failing to contribute towards Māori development (see, for example, Stokes, 1985; Teariki, *et al.*, 1992). Te Awēkotuku (1991) addresses this by outlining several principles for ethical conduct with Māori communities. By focusing upon the responsibilities of the researcher, the rights of the participants in the research process and in the treatment of the research findings is highlighted (*ibid*).

Durie (1998, pp. 261–262) draws upon the notion of mana in her framework of Māori ethics in research; Mana tangata, observing the dignity, safety, mutuality; Mana Whakahaere, issues of collaboration and control, and; Mana motuhake, the emphasis on outcomes and evidence of benefit to Māori communities. Durie (2000, p. 15) thus finds research with Māori “ethically appropriate” when formed “upon Māori cultural values for guidance, upon Māori systems of ethicality and cultural imperatives”.

Both the focus group process and the focus group feedback and review hui allowed for participants to collaborate upon and veto or verify the research findings and the nature in which they were being reported. It also provided for clarification about how the research findings were to be disseminated, and potential outcomes of the report. The purpose of this report, ultimately, is to contribute to Māori development through the provision of data to local government for the purposes of (1) improving their understanding and efforts to secure full Māori participation in local decision-making processes, and (2) encouraging further

research by local governments with Māori communities in their respective areas, such as mana whenua.

This research thus sought to conform to a high standard of ethically appropriate research. This included approaching the research with a commitment to a high level of responsiveness and accountability to the participants, and outcomes that will contribute to positive Māori development.

### **Focus group make-up**

Existing research tells us that there are some potential influences on what people know about local government, in particular, age, education and type of local authority. This study conducted seven focus groups of Māori electors. Each group had in between 6 to 10 participants. These groups covered:

- participants in tertiary education, aged 18–24 years (x 2 groups)
- participants in the workforce, aged 18–24 years (x 1 group)
- participants from rural areas, aged 25 years and over (x 2 groups)
- participants from urban areas, aged 25 years and over (x 2 groups)

Initially it was proposed that focus group participants would be drawn from the Māori electoral roll. However, it was decided that membership of the Māori Electoral Roll might introduce a bias into the selection of respondents, and subsequently the data findings. As with the telephone survey, participants resided in the Manawatu / Wanganui region. However, many had lived or had whānau, hapu, and iwi connections to other parts of Aotearoa. As the research was about local government in general, participants reflected on the places they were from and familiar with. The findings are therefore not to a particular area, but rather are relevant to local government in general.

### **Recruitment of participants**

The initial phase of recruiting focus group members involved advertising and approaching potential participants. Knowledge of Māori networks and the importance for Māori of having familiarity with members of the research team was essential in this process. Familiarity at an interpersonal level was important in order for trust to be generated. In this respect the research approach may be different from research conducted in a Pākehā setting where the lack of familiarity (indeed anonymity) or the professional credentials of the researcher may be vital to achieving participants' trust and willingness to participate in research. Panui (notices) advertising the focus groups were prepared and placed on community noticeboards, sent out through email networks, and distributed first-hand. These panui were targeted at the different types of participant groups, and involved both utilising the language of the participants and providing suitable avenues for indicating interest, for example email and texting (see Appendix 1: Rangatahi Māori panui).

A key step was then the initial contact with prospective focus group members, via email, phone, and in particular (in the case of the 18–24 age group) texting. Initial contact set up a pre-focus group hui, which introduced the first stage of kanohi kitea between members of the research team and potential participants. This invariably entailed one on one or small group meetings, many visits to local cafés, familiar places such as the library, and in some cases, the

participant's home. At these pre-focus group hui the broad topic and general nature of the main focus group hui were introduced, the information sheet was distributed (see Appendix 2a), the participant's questions were answered, and details of the venue and time were provided.

All of this contributed to the essential task of building familiarity with the kaupapa (purpose and elements) of the focus group hui and research. A member of the research team would talk more to the prospective focus group participants about who the team was, and explained that the hui (focus groups) were part of a broader project about New Zealanders' knowledge and interaction with local government. It was explained the broader project involved a telephone survey, but that hui were planned to provide a more culturally appropriate format for Māori to contribute their views. The effort spent on building familiarity with the kaupapa and nature of the research would appear to be an integral component of research with young people and Māori.

The pre-focus group hui were then followed by an initial reflection period for the prospective focus group members. Where people were interested in attending, further contacts were then made by phone, email and text to remind them of the hui details. Māori in both age groups (18-24 years and 25 years and over), and both location groupings (rural and urban) readily appreciated the nature of the research. A heightened interest in the topic may have resulted from the contemporary political context. The Nationhood speech by then National Party leader Don Brash in Orewa in 2004 and the public debate and hikoī (national march) during 2005 about the proposed Foreshore and Seabed legislation had heightened this sense of the importance of politics. These events may have increased interest in research on Māori political participation, including local participation, among people who otherwise may not have been drawn to the topic.

People who were unable to attend generally gave as reasons heavy workloads and other sport or community commitments. This issue was also raised in the focus group discussions. Those interested in attending often asked if they could bring someone else with them, or mention the hui to others. As a result a snowballing process assisted with recruitment of additional focus group members. Indeed, participants were encouraged to bring others with them, including their children. This was seen as important both for people's 'safety', and as a natural (cultural) thing to do. The research team had ensured the venue was suitable for children, and children were welcomed.

Overall, the pre-focus group contact was an opportunity to indicate to prospective participants that the hui and associated processes would be conducted according to tikanga Māori, and would incorporate Māori cultural values such as the inclusion of friends and whānau members. It was typical for 3-5 pre-focus group contacts to be made over a period of time with each participant. As well as being occasions for confirming and re-confirming all the details, these were important for reassuring all involved that the project was going ahead as planned.

#### **4.2 THE FOCUS GROUP PROCESS**

The process with focus group participants involved six steps:

- initial focus group / data gathering hui

- debrief and feedback hui
- hui to review draft report
- post out of draft report and individual hui
- hui for the presentation of the report
- update newsletter

Initial focus groups were held between December 2004 and August 2005. Hui were held in the early evening (starting at 5.30pm) and included kai (food for the evening). This time was seen as preferable for both those from the workforce and tertiary students who had finished classes for the day. The length of time of the focus group was around an hour and a half to two hours. This seemed to be long enough for getting through the range of topics, but not so long as to be tiring at the end of a working day or week.

As a point of collaboration with members of the participant group, an appropriate focus group venue was organised through the local Māori students tertiary association, Manawatahi. All focus group hui were subsequently held at a venue dedicated to Māori learning support called Kainga Rua (A Second Home). It was not known to all participants, but is a venue that is intended to provide comfort and safety. Rural participants, coming from a wide range of small towns and country areas (for example, Levin, Ashhurst, Feilding and Pahiatua) indicated they preferred to meet at Kainga Rua, as it was a central location and was convenient if they planned to be in town for the day. Rural participants were offered petrol vouchers to assist with their travel expenses, so that the cost of travel would not preclude people from participating.

Most young people in Palmerston North were in tertiary education. This outcome may be a result of Palmerston North's high student population. Young people (18-24 years old) were generally easier to recruit as they did not have family and work responsibilities, although there was less awareness of local government than the older age group. They did have their own commitments (for example, kapahaka practice) that were accommodated in the scheduling of the focus groups. One group of young people agreed to take part and in return asked for a member of the research team (whom they knew had skills in that area) to take the next practice. This was readily agreed to as part of the reciprocal relationship between the research team and participants. On the other hand, the older participants were more difficult to enrol in the focus groups because of their family and work commitments.

The venue was open for participants who wished to arrive early, and kai was set out ready for people when they arrived. Some participants who arrived early were keen to help with setting out food, so there was a sense in which the hui proceeded at a number of levels – from when people first arrived to the actual group discussion and then cleaning up. The sense of the room and provision of food was an important element of manaakitanga (respecting and caring for participants). Once people had been greeted and took a seat, the hui began with an opening karakia and mihi (acknowledgement) from the research team. Following the formal greeting, the format of the evening and 'housekeeping' details were given, as well additional copies of the information sheet and the consent forms (see Appendix 2b). Everyone was invited to participate in mihimihi (a process of introducing one-self and greeting others), including the research team, for the process of whakawhānaungatanga (relationship-building). Once everyone knew each other, a karakia was said for the kai, people then took food and the kōrero began.

For all focus groups there was a similar format with a set of discussion starters (see Appendix 3). The hui were conducted in a relatively informal way, for example, people engaged with one another, got up to get more food, and tended to children they had brought along. Near the end of the hui the researchers would ask for any last comments, and recap on the process to be taken from there. Contact details were reconfirmed, and in some instances information about local government, brought to the hui by the researchers, was taken by participants. The hui was then closed with a karakia, often by one of the participants.

### **Debrief and review hui**

After the initial analysis of data from the focus group hui, two debrief hui were held to present participants with the preliminary findings (see Appendix 4a: Debrief Hui Agenda and 4b: Preliminary Findings Report). The hui were again held at the Kainga Rua venue, and emails and phone calls made to contact participants to provide them with the details. As the debrief hui was scheduled a few months after the last focus group was held, nearly all participants contact details remained the same, with a few emails and cell phones numbers changed. All participants had at least one contact number that remained the same, and so those that had changed were updated as part of the process.

The debrief hui were held on two separate occasions, and attended by approximately 75% of all participants. Others who could not attend the debrief hui were provided with a copy of the preliminary findings report. All participants, including those who attended the debrief hui, were invited to send in additional written feedback via email or to meet one-on-one with a member of the research team. Gaining feedback from participants was important to confirm or change the themes that had been drawn out of the data by the researchers, and get further clarification from participants of the key points raised. It was important to ensure the nature of the themes and data reporting was approved of by the participants.

As stated previously, past research about Māori has adopted a 'deficit approach' which regards Māori as lacking appropriate skills, knowledge, or other attributes. Instead, this research considered it an important part of Mana Tangata (Durie, 1998) to value participants' knowledge, experiences and perspectives. During the debrief hui, to re-emphasise Mana Motuhake (ibid), the purpose of the project was again discussed, as was the potential and anticipated outcomes.

Feedback from the debrief hui was then incorporated into the project findings. Although the focus groups formed one section of a larger project, it was considered important for the findings of the focus groups to be presented in a stand-alone report. This was both because of the unique nature within the overall project of the focus group data (i.e. Māori, qualitative), and of how the findings would hopefully be utilised by end-users such as local government. Once a report had been drafted, a hui was held in order for participants to review the draft (see Appendix 5: Review Hui Agenda). The review hui was again held at Kainga Rua, and emails and phone calls made to contact participants and provide them with the details of the hui. Emails had been sent previously to participants, indicating that progress on the report was being made and a review hui was to be held.

Although some participants' contact details had changed (a particular feature of research involving young people), it was possible to re-establish contact by using Māori community

networks and online internet networks<sup>9</sup>. Popular websites that are used by rangatahi participants proved an effective way to contact them by, for example, placing a post on their web page. Where participants had been contacted in this way, many responded in the same manner by replying in a post on the researcher's web page. That members of the research team shared the communication 'culture' of the participants, for example, having a cell phone to text and web page to post comments on, was subsequently significant to the success of the research.

One of the key findings of the report was that participants felt that information provided by local government was uninteresting. The review hui of the draft was therefore an important step in the process so participants could provide feedback on whether or not the report was suitable, that is, whether it was easy to read and looked interesting, whether the structure was appropriate, and so on. A name for the report had been offered by a member of the research team, drawn from whakatauki that reflected the themes arising out of the focus group discussion. It was an important opportunity to confirm with participants that this was a suitable name and expressed the 'feeling' of the research findings.

Participants again had the choice of having the material sent to them, for their written feedback, or an individual meeting with a member of the research team. A small number of participants attended the review hui, the majority opting to review and provide feedback about the draft report on an individual basis. We were unable to obtain the contact details of some of the participants (who had changed all their details) before the date of the review hui, and so had been unable to inform them of it. However, some of the participants who attended were aware able to provide contact details that we did not have. When the review feedback had been incorporated into the draft report, a hard copy of the report was posted out to all participants. A stamped self-addressed envelope was included so that the participants could send back their written comments if they wished. The details of the researchers were again confirmed for those who wished to organise one-on-one meetings in order to provide feedback.

### **Presentation hui**

Accountability was a key theme both raised in the findings of the research about local government, and participants' concerns over research in general. As stated previously, as an integral part of the methodology for this research it was regarded as vital to maintain strong communication and accountability to all participants throughout the research process, including the report writing phase. A final hui will be held to present the final report to participants, their whānau, and other members of the community. The hui is important to acknowledge participants' contribution to the research, provide them with a copy of the report, and express manaakitanga to them a final time. This in no way indicates closure of the researcher-participant relationship. Rather, it is intended to provide both closure to the research process in terms of the project, and to release the information into the wider community.

### **Update newsletter**

In the research process many participants expressed interest in the dissemination of the research findings to end-users. The different types of end-users and means to further disperse the information were explored with participants. However, to ensure a high level of accountability

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<sup>9</sup> These included [www.olderfriends.co.nz](http://www.olderfriends.co.nz) and [www.bebo.com](http://www.bebo.com).

to the participants, it was also considered important to report back to them as to the results of the research and any outcomes of the study. In the research process, participants expressed scepticism towards local governments' engagement of Māori, and were similarly were sceptical of any positive effects this report would have on local governments for Māori. Reporting back on any outcomes was seen as particularly relevant, given that later in the year there would be local elections. A year after the presentation hui (July 2007) a newsletter will be sent to participants (in July 2008) describing dissemination of the results to end-users, such as local government, and any perceived outcomes for Māori.

### **Focus group data analysis**

A simple scale was used to report the strength of agreement and difference over issues amongst participants in the focus group discussions. All perspectives were recorded, using the measures "few", "some", and "most". When the majority of participants had expressed or agreed with an issue, the words "most", "the majority of" or "generally" was used to indicate the level of agreement. When only one participant held that perspective, but it was considered of particular insight to the issues under discussion, the term "one participant" was used.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP TECHNIQUE**

In addition to the research principles (Durie, 1998; Smith, 1999) discussed above, other aspects incorporated into the focus group hui strengthened the process and outcomes of the research. The following aspects were seen as particularly important to our participants (Māori, young people) and the nature of the issues under discussion (some being controversial).

#### **Whakawhiti whakaaro: the free exchange of thoughts**

Important to focus group research is the flow of dialogue and the ability of participants to connect with and freely discuss the topics. Broad questions allowed participants to explore and raise what was important to them.

"Is petrol to do with the council? I'd be interested in that? I don't know if it is, but how the petrol rates have gone up."

A relaxed and open atmosphere meant that participants felt comfortable not only with being honest about what they didn't know, but also with asking questions about the topic. In this way, although not action research, the focus group acted for participants as an information-sharing forum between themselves, the researchers, and each other. It was positive to see that younger participants, who were the most likely to be reserved, felt comfortable enough to ask questions, albeit tentatively.

"In local council, is there like an age limit? Why don't they have like young people? They're always old. Sorry. (Laughter)."

A significant aspect of the flow of focus group dialogue was listening and being responsive to the 'culture' (age, gender, ethnicity) of the participants. During the focus group discussions participants used their standard language. Reference to concepts in te reo Māori (Māori language) was a dominant feature of all focus groups, while younger participants' dialogue strongly featured slang words and grammatical expressions. It was important to affirm the Mana Tangata (Durie, 1998) of the participants and their thoughts as expressed through their language. Thus, quotes were not changed to fix grammatical errors.

“What does our mayor do for a job, be’s a mayor?”

“True that. (Yeah like, hard).”

By encouraging participants to discuss their experiences and what was relevant to them at the time, the focus group discussion fostered inclusion of all participants. Important to focus group research and enhancing the flow of dialogue is also how participants are able to connect to each other, and stimulate each other’s thoughts and comments. It was critical to this research to include in the data recording and reporting where the dialogue flowed between participants. When data was entered into the database software<sup>10</sup> a conscious decision was made to identify this aspect of dialogue in order to capture reactions and the natural flow of the focus group thought process. In this report where a comment is in parentheses this indicates a second and sometimes third speaker’s interjection.

“Not interested. (Not interesting). Yeah. Don’t know enough. (Don’t know).”

The recording of how thoughts are supported in the focus group is a key way that qualitative research of this kind can show the strength, validity and support of ideas within the group.

“It’s already sorted before they send everything out. (Really?). (Yeah). (It’s true).”

### **Kia mārama te korero: let the discussion be light**

Māori political participation and representation have been the subject of debate throughout the history of Aotearoa. In particular, the issues around tino rangatiratanga (hapū / iwi / Māori self-determination) and kāwanatanga (the right to govern) carry a degree of controversy. The emergence of these issues in the discussion on local government was therefore expected. The heightened political climate, as a result of the Nationhood speech and the Foreshore and Seabed debate, however, may have increased this tendency. The discussion at times reflected frustration and a powerlessness felt by participants.

“You get depressed [name of facilitator], you get depressed, you get sad, disillusioned, why keep going back to be beaten? You, you just give it quits.”

It was therefore seen as important to conduct the focus group hui in a way that would strive to keep participants at an emotionally safe level. As the hui were conducted in accordance with tikanga Māori, many aspects of the hui acted as natural safeguards. Examples are the use of karakia and kai.

Karakia was said at the beginning and end of each hui. This provided safeguards to the focus group hui on several levels. At a spiritual level, in seeking guidance and protection, it asked that the hui run smoothly and was an experience that was beneficial for all present. It is not asked that tensions or conflict be removed, but rather that they can be addressed in a constructive manner that benefits, not harms, the participants. On a practical level, karakia seeks to contain the discussion within the focus group by, for example, providing a clear beginning and end. Much like ‘leaving work at the office’, a karakia whakamutunga (closing karakia) can help ensure participants don’t emotionally carry any issues to their homes in a negative way. Karakia was used at all focus group hui for these purposes. The involvement of

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<sup>10</sup> Microsoft Access™ was used to build a database for data entry and analysis.



participants, by for example leading or joining in on the karakia, facilitated their involvement at both this spiritual and practical level.

After mihimihi and introductions, kai was served and eaten throughout the focus group hui. It was served on separate tables, where participants were asked to fill their plates and return to their seats at the discussion table, eating through the discussion. This technique was employed because of the grounding effect kai provides and, like karakia, it did so on several levels. On one level, it provides the element of noa (normalness). Traditionally at many other hui, kai is provided after the formal discussion is finished. This is often because the hui may involve, for example, topics and tasks that are tapu (sacred). Food is then shared afterwards to introduce noa (or normalness, removing the sacredness). As an objective of the research was to keep the discussion and emotions grounded, kai was eaten throughout to maintain an element of noa. On another level, by standing up to retrieve more kai from the kai table, participants could simply and comfortably avoid, abstain or withdraw from the discussion without needing to declare or making it obvious they were doing so. This type of discussion, being about politics and people's knowledge, may have included questions participants did not want to answer, discussion on controversial topics, or debate that was becoming heated or uncomfortable on an emotional level. A key factor in the success of the hui was the degree of comfort people had, and the understanding that all levels of involvement in the research was voluntary. On another level, the act of eating while sitting and discussing these topics added to participants' general comfort and physical needs throughout the hui.

"Having a feed's an ice breaker."

"Nothing like a good kai."

In hindsight, another level of protection, in accordance with tikanga Māori, that the focus group hui could have employed was the presence of kaumatua and kuia. The spiritual, cultural, mental and emotional guidance and protection kaumatua and kuia give would have provided a deeper sense of purpose and a stronger sense of safety for both participants and the researchers.

### **Hatakihi: hardcase!**

As another technique to ensure the focus group hui was conducted on a level that was informal (especially with the rangatahi groups), a degree of humour was used as a way of encouraging participants to relax and feel comfortable. This was introduced at the beginning of each hui when the facilitator would explain the hui agenda and format:

"You know me, I'll blab on, so yeah just tell me to shush, say 'hey! I'm talking! Who's the focus group here?'. (Laughter). Ok?"

Interestingly, the participants' sense of humour and laughter arose as a natural dynamic in the focus group hui, which proved both significant to maintaining discussion that was emotionally light, and in the communication between the participants as they related to each others experiences. Throughout the research laughter often accompanied responses and indicated participants' shared sense of humour, and sometimes irony. As with the interjections showing participants' support or agreement on ideas brought up by other participants, it was an important part of the dialogue and was included in the recording and reporting of focus group comments. Hatakihi (Māori transliteration for the slang-term 'hard case', meaning humorous)

captures the aspect of laughter arising in the focus group hui that accompanied typical experiences and a sense of irony in the experience.

"Do we know who the mayor is? . . . . (Nah). (Laughter)."

"That's her aye? It's on that corner aye? On nah, sorry wrong person. (Laughter)."

Participants' use of humour when reflecting on their personal experiences proved a key element of relationship-building amongst participants. This encouraged other participants to share further issues, including those of a more serious nature.

"What if your back yard floods all the time, do you tell them? (You do bro, you do!). What, 'Man, we got this swimming pool in the back'? (Laughter)."

"What do you mean my parking fines are going to Baycorp. (Laughter)."

"You might have crazy neighbours! (Laughter)."

Humour also indicated the shared sense of, for example, skepticism about the perceived culture or characteristics of local government.

"We ticked, and man, a whole heap of us went like 'Kowhai', like a native tree, instead we were told they chose some sort of cherry blossom. (Laughter). It's pink. (Ohhh man)."

"We can develop it, we get the putea. (Laughter). That's it, you know, it's like double standards you know?"

"It would be mud water, did you hear about that? (But they were telling them you could drink it?!). (Laughter)."

Humour therefore did not suggest that participants (or what they had to say) were not being taken seriously. Rather it featured when there were shared understandings or experiences, and reflected common recognition of an experience.

"(They never get back to us). You could say 'Well sorry I failed'. (Laughter)."

"I rang them up to tell them that they missed our rubbish bags again! (Laughter)."

Humour also arose throughout the focus group hui as participants reflected on their own involvement in the research. Participants readily applied their sense of irony regarding local government culture to the focus group process.

"Right, said my piece, I'll catch you fullas up aye? (Laughter)."

"We hereby make a pact that if [name] gets in. (Laughter). (Yeah we'll vote). Yeah, you remember us girl. (Laughter). (We'll be looking for that thank you card)."

Shared humour was also a way of forging the facilitator-participant relationship and a key means of communication between them. It was used to check those present had understood each other.

"Do you know what I'm saying? (Laughter). Oh, that wasn't very clear was it? (Laughter)."

Thus, although some of the humour expressed by the participants at times may have seemed random and unrelated to the discussion, it was important that the facilitator allowed it to flow. This was in affirmation of participants' knowledge, experiences, and humour as valid and meaningful to the research process.

"They might be smiling at you, but they might have holes in their teeth like we do! (Laughter)."

### **Ngā āwangawanga: hearing the concerns**

Another essential aspect of the research involved responding to concerns that participants expressed, including any concerns about the research process. A few participants raised concerns over anonymity in the research, and the consequences of providing negative feedback about local government.

"Are you from, from the council? . . (No). Oh. (Laughter)."

"This is not gonna come back and bite us on the bum is it? (Laughter)."

Participants were informed that their names and consent forms would remain in the research teams possession and would be treated as confidential, while the names of people and places would be omitted from the research data. There were, however, also concerns over the ownership of the research and how to make end-users, like people in local government, accountable to the recommendations. This is a valid dilemma because the participants, from whom the recommendations came, remain anonymous. They felt that their comments could therefore be easily ignored by those receiving them.

"Along the process my name gets detached from it, so there's no comeback towards my concern and say 'hey, where are you taking this?'"

The nature of local government, and queries as to how responsive local government would be to research such as this, was raised by participants. Concerns, for example, over the tokenistic treatment of Māori issues by local government were also concerns for tokenistic treatment of research about Māori local political participation. Participants were sceptical about the actual outcomes this research would have for Māori when given to local government.

"Because some of the structures that they send this information to don't have the cultural structure to actually support the kōrero."

These issues, in particular the practical application of the research findings, are all valid concerns about this research, and research in general. There was and is no immediate resolution for these concerns, as they will be ongoing issues for this research, as they are with all research. What the research team could do was assure their accountability to the participants, in terms of their

commitment to ensuring end-users receive the results, respond to the findings and contribute to positive change both short term and long term.

### **He tangata, he mātauranga: every person has knowledge, has experience.**

A common theme amongst participants in both the recruiting stage and the beginning of the focus group hui was the perception they knew very little about local government. This resulted in participants at first being tentative in their contribution to the focus group discussion.

“Um, I’m new at this stuff . . .”

An important part of the process for this research was confirming for participants that they did know more than they originally thought. It both confirmed for participants the relevance of their experiences and knowledge, and encouraged them to reflect further through the focus group hui process.

“I actually kind of enjoyed that. (Same). I thought I wasn’t gonna say anything, but (yeah same) but I just couldn’t shut up.”

“I can’t believe how much [name] said. (Yeah). [Name] not gonna believe it. ([Name] surprises me all the time).”

The importance of the participants’ experiences and perspectives was again reconfirmed through the report format, and the use of the participants’ own words to present the key findings of the research.

“It was good to see stuff that we did say in there, like, hey that’s us! (Laughter).”

Many participants reported an increased interest in local government politics as a result of involvement in the focus groups, albeit with a sense of limited knowledge about local government processes.

“He should stand for council. (Ohhh!). (Yeah). (I’ll need training in everything). (Laughter). Aye. (Nothing wrong with change).”

“I reckon I should go back and ask the mayor to come to [name of place]. (Yeah!). (Aye, eah! Come on Sundays, yeah boil up on Sundays, yip).”

### **Manaakitanga: Respect and Care**

Of paramount importance to this research was that participants were shown manaakitanga in accordance with Mana Tangata. All the above aspects of methodology reflect in some way the manaakitanga that the researchers strove to show the participants. To summarise, this included aspects such as:

- Embracing and fostering the sharing of participants’ experiences, and in their own language.
- Accepting and answering people’s questions (about local government) there and then.
- Striving to ensure a level of emotional safety for participants.
- Fostering and being responsive to humour, (however random).
- Hearing and being honest and responsive towards concerns.

- Reaffirming each person as knowledgeable and contributing value to the research.

Participants positively responded to many aspects of the research. As a natural part of the discussion about how local government could better facilitate education about local government, participants affirmed the focus group setting, with the principles we employed. For most participants was their first focus group experience.

"Like these, like these munchies (laughter) garlic bread, talking here, you know."

"This sort of setting I'm more comfortable."

"Like a 'laxed environment."

Again, participants confirmed the focus group hui as an environment which made them feel comfortable and confident to share their experiences, and reaffirmed their knowledge and the value of their contribution. This in turn made participants feel motivated to participate.

"Groups are always like this though, they go 'so short' (yeah) you know."

"I'll tell you what, if there was more people I'd still have my say damnit. (Laughter)."

As a result, participants were interested in both the results of the research, and the possible outcomes of the research. Of particular significance to this research, participants further confirmed the focus group process as a model which successfully engaged citizens, and could be used on a larger scale.

"Was there much difference between the groups? and between the age groups?"

"So, this is just the start of something that could be done everywhere, and on a big scale"

Overall the use of focus group method from a tikanga Māori base was the best research method for the purpose and outcomes sought from this type of study; the type of participants, the nature of the research topic, and issues under discussion. This was confirmed by the participants themselves in reflection of the methodology used.

## 5. FINDINGS

The research questions focused upon three broad areas: what do people know? what do people think? what can people recommend? This helped participants feel free to explore a wide range of issues and topics to do with people's knowledge, experiences, concerns and aspirations about local government. An outcome of this approach meant participants were able to identify what was important and of relevance to them. Through the group discussion, a wide range of topics arose under the three areas, including:

### 1. What do people know about local government?

- broad knowledge about local government
- information from and about their local council
- contact with local government

### 2. What do people think about local government?

- Māori representation and Māori issues
- Participation by citizens in local government
- Engagement of citizens by local government

### 3. What do people recommend for local government?

- improving the information flow
- engaging Māori
- enhancing participation
- improving accountability

## 5.1. WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

### 5.1.1 KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Through the focus group discussion, participants described their understanding of what local government does, their familiarity with their local council and its structures, services, and their knowledge about local government processes such as enrolling and voting.

#### **Familiarity with local government and its structures**

Participants could generally identify the name of the city and district council. There was some knowledge of past mayors and mayoral candidates, and sometimes the current mayor. There was some knowledge of councillors, but most were unsure about whether or not those councillors were currently in office.

"Is it still [name]? (Is it [name]?). I've never seen her."

The participants were aware of the issues that the council is responsible for. However, the structures of the council were unfamiliar to them, including who were the appropriate people, committee or contact person for these issues. Participants were generally unfamiliar with the make-up of local government. This included both representative and administrative aspects.

"Isn't there more than one person? So, I mean, how do you know which one to ask for? I mean, let alone know who they are? (Laughter)."

"The mayor picks the, you know, 'oh you can be my right hand' 'you can be on my other hand'. (Oh). Well that's how I thought it worked, that's how I've always thought it worked."

"What do you mean by wards? I don't get that."

### **Knowledge about processes**

There was a lot of confusion around the process of enrolling for local government elections. Participants were generally unsure of how they became enrolled, where they were enrolled, and when and how to check they were enrolled.

"Like I still don't know, do I vote here or do I vote at home?"

"I didn't think I had to, you know what I mean? Like, 'cause my actual postal address is in [place], so I thought oh 'cause my postal address is over there or whatever."

"People across the road, they didn't get them, and they were going 'nah we don't vote here 'cause we don't live here' like in a hostel. (Oh right)."

In addition, there was a lot of confusion around voting, including how to vote and how often local government elections are held. This resulted in participants not voting due to not knowing how to vote, or wanting to vote but missing the vote casting date.

"It didn't have like a time on it to say when I had to hand it back (okay) and so I thought I had all the time in the world, so then I hear on the radio "oh so the new mayor in this town is" whatever it is, it's like 'oh, I think I'm late'. (Laughter)."

Participants generally had low-level knowledge about other means to access or participate in local government.

"I really wouldn't have any idea how to access council, any of the meetings, um, and any of the forums that they have."

"You need to know where to go to and need to know the system, and like we don't learn anything at school about councils and so we don't know where to start."

Participants identified this lack of knowledge as a primary reason for not participating in local government processes and decision-making.

"People I talk to don't even know that there are differences between local government and government. They think it's one and the same."

"Just like anything, if you don't have any information on something it's like it doesn't exist (yeah) you know? If you didn't know there were VCR's out there, you wouldn't even think of going, getting to get one, it's just the same. (That's it aye)."

### **5.1.2 INFORMATION FROM AND ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Participants discussed information from and about local government, the nature of that information, and the subsequent affect on their level of interest or knowledge about local government.

## Information from local government

Generally, participants found information from their local council hard to obtain.

"Yeah, you have to search, you have to look for it."

"They make you work for it. (Oh yeah). Like it's hard to find out."

Most participants further identified that the information that was obtained wasn't very user friendly; either too long, boring, and so forth. This included the information received about electoral candidates.

"I've never made it to the end of any of those books. (Laughter)."

In particular, the short electoral candidates profiles were considered by participants a poor substitute for interaction between candidates and communities.

"I don't trust those. (I was just gonna say that). It's hard to judge, you got to wait 'till you see their eyes and hear their kōrero."

Further to this, many participants felt the manner in which local government circulated information was unsuitable.

"I mean like they probably put it on, like fifty percent student population and they put it on [name of radio station]. Where's the logic in that? You know? (Laughter). (Or in the back of the [name of paper])."

"They're a bit alien too those meetings, I mean you could go in there and nobody knows who you are, because you could just be popping in to see what these things are all about, and it's almost like you're invisible, you know?"

Due to a lack of information and visibility, many participants agreed they would not easily access the council.

"I knew that's the council building, I probably would have gone there to reception to ask where things are but, I mean, because it's not really out there you don't."

"It's um you go there and it's like 'who are you?' and I'm thinking like hello sister you haven't met me. (Laughter). You know? And I'm not too scared to do that but a lot of people you know they will go away and that sux.."

## Nature of information

Most participants who were familiar with local government and their responsibilities attributed this familiarity to high publicity; for example, the notoriety of some councillors, and controversy over different issues and expenditure. Word of mouth was seen as a primary factor in spreading knowledge about councillors and local issues.

"Those are the fullas that like, who have the power to change the [name of place] aye? (Yep). Like what they've just done to the [name of place]."

"He can speak Māori. (Yeah that's how I know him)."



Participants felt that their lack of awareness about local government was partly caused by the lack of coverage in popular media, such as television.

"Probably 'cause you don't see very much around. You know how you see, like um, like the national government everywhere like on tv. and that (tv. yeah) so its always being drummed into you, but the rest we don't know about."

Many participants indicated they were not interested in local government because there was no information to make it known how they were relevant to citizens' everyday lives.

"Unless you can see something happening in your life that's changing by the council, you're not interested. Sorry but that's the perspective, a very blunt perspective, but on a whole that's how people feel. (Mmm)."

"Not interested. (Not interesting). Yeah. (HmMMM). Don't know enough. (Don't know)"

"Unless it impacts on their life, or make the council do something for me and my family, I'm not really bothered with them. That's definitely the perspective."

Many participants were frustrated that local government did not communicate better how it is relevant or important to the everyday person.

"Yeah and why should you vote? I mean, no one around me was voting so why should I? Why should I, you know, do it? There was no like information, like it's really important, like if it is really important they should be saying."

### 5.1.3 CONTACT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The discussion about participants' experiences with local government focused upon what contact they had made with local government and what contact they had with representatives.

#### Contact with local government

There was some contact by participants with local council over issues such as rubbish bags, recycling, water, dog registration, and transport. Participants who had gained some familiarity with local government through contact with them felt positive about what services local government had to offer.

"Once you understand kind of the structure and what they're there to do for you, you think 'right, okay so there is something that I can do', oh so that's cool, next time when such and such happens I'd probably go there and this is the kind of things they can do for me."

"I know there are places that I can go to help me and help my whānau if need be, or you know, to help somebody else. So I think, you know the whole thing that knowledge is power, it's true."

Some participants who had visited council buildings, and who did not have familiarity with their local government, had found it an unwelcoming place for people who needed assistance in being steered in the right direction.

"You sit down and hope someone's noticed you've walked through the door. (Yeah)."

"They all know what they're doing there (yeah that's right) (yeah). But I mean nobody's there to say 'oh hi, yeah, why don't you have a seat, the cookies are over there'. (No, none of that). (Laughter)."

Participants who themselves, or whose family, had negative experiences of interacting with local government felt these experiences marred their interest in local government and local government issues.

"Old people they have a history and they have good memories, so who's gonna wanna know what's happening in local government when the governments just been trashing you for how many years? So you're not interested, that's the association, why would I go there? Why would I take my kids there? Why would I take my family to go there? So you know, you don't wanna know about it."

"We pushed and pushed and pushed for months and nothing happened. City council didn't even come out until a year after we had put the petition in and said 'oh nah, this doesn't warrant for anything', so we gave up."

Certain local authority processes were considered frustrating by participants, and deterred people from participating in local government. In particular, when participants could not readily access the person or section of local government they needed they felt discouraged from participating further.

"And the fact that you have to go through people to get to that person, to get to another person... sucks 'cause you should just go straight to the person that needs dealing with, that you need to deal with (yup), and that's what makes it harder."

### **Contact with representatives**

Participants were positive about local government representatives who had high visibility and interaction with their communities.

"I've always had the impression that she's really always doing stuff, you know. I think she used to have meetings, I think she still does, but even though I wasn't in her particular community, it seemed to me like she was very hands on. I'm not surprised that she became mayor."

Participants commented positively on being able to recognise and connect on a grassroots level to representatives from their community.

"I did see her at a rugby game. (Did you? Wow). (She got your vote!)."

"Councils pretty cool 'cause like the mayor is the butcher (laughter) yeah. (That's cool man)."

"Yeah and on National television, he was wearing a [name of community group] t-shirt. (Yep, black one with white writing). I've got that t-shirt. (Laughter)."

Participants valued representatives that were easily accessible by members of the public.

"She's awesome. (Really?). She's quite relational [name]. This is my whakaaro; she has her finger on the pulse, because when you're struggling with issues and you don't find answers with no income and whatever, she has an open door policy."

"I thought it was a long shot, she's the mayor. All I did was I went in to her receptionist and [name] actually came out and met me personally and made time (whoa). . . I did just not expect that sort of accessibility. That actually meant a lot to me."

"She made the appointment in person and I just thought 'wow'."

Further to this, participants were motivated to participate in local government, for example by voting in elections, when they were familiar with and had access to elected representatives.

"I voted for [name]. (Laughter). (You the bomb girl). Only because I know him. (Is that what motivated you to vote?) Yeah, just knowing him, you know."

"So it's like if there's some kind of struggle going on and um, one of the councillors is willing to roll up their sleeves and get in and give you a hand, then you're more likely to pay attention to them as well."

"They're more motivated to vote for someone if you have contact with them, because you can tell more about their personality, than you can on a flyer that comes in the mailbox."

On the same issue, participants remarked that low levels of contact with elected representatives affected their level of interest.

"It's one of things where, 'cause you don't see them, you don't care about them."

"If one of them made an effort to come out and do something, you know that does well for the whole community well then yeah, but because none of them did. . . "

All participants, regardless of voting behaviour, agreed that a lack of familiarity with candidates leads to abstention from voting or feelings of meaningless voting.

"If you don't know anything about them, and you don't know anything about their policies and that, then what's the point of, of like voting? That's just stupid."

"I didn't vote because I didn't even know any of them."

"Yeah 'cause I looked at their faces and just went 'nah, nah, nah, nah. Never heard of any of them'. (Didn't recognise them from anything?). That purely why man, I mean if I knew someone, like actually seen them do something, I probably would have voted for them."

## 5.2 WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

### 5.2.1 REPRESENTATION OF MĀORI CONCERNS

Participants' discussion about Māori concerns in local government revolved around Māori representation in council, commitment to Māori issues, and issues connected to citizens' sense of belonging to the area.

#### **Māori Representation**

There was generally a high level of interest amongst participants about Māori representation. Some participants felt that there was little real opportunity for Māori to become representatives in local authorities.

"Only because the common knowledge, the knowledge amongst us Māori is 'you'll never get in there'. And we know we're gonna go in and lose. You know."

Many participants agreed that, due to a lack of support for Māori representatives, Māori representation is dangerous for the wellbeing of those who choose to fulfil that role.

"Why go in there, regardless of what I know, because are they gonna support me? Have they got my back? Hell no!"

"I don't want people of ours to go in to do the whole tokenism thing, they've promised them a role but they're not willing to give them the power."

"Well for me I'd rather have nothing because we're losing anyway, why risk more people when we could lose."

In particular, some participants felt that, due to this tokenism, the contribution of Māori representatives was undervalued and ignored.

"Cause it's their system aye? You chuck that Māori in and it will be him and them."

"Oh you're just disruptive, you're a radical'. The moment you disagree you're a radical."

Most participants agreed, however, that it was important to persevere with Māori representation.

"Our thoughts is that it's best to have something in there than nothing."

"It's like kinda this two edged sword; if you don't feel comfortable you're not going to go there, and then it's never gonna change and become a comfortable place."

Overall, participants felt Māori representation of Māori issues was important, and the presence of Māori in local government for that purpose.

"I'd vote for a Māori, 'cause he's a Māori, Honestly I would. Just cause there's not enough Māori in there."

"Yeah, we gotta even numbers up aye? I would never ever vote if there's only one or two Māori on there."

Several participants stressed, however, that simply being of Māori ethnicity was not qualification enough to represent Māori issues.

"I wouldn't vote for someone just because he's Māori."

### **Commitment to Māori issues**

The impression of some participants was that the commitment of local government to tikanga Māori is tokenistic.

"Sitting over here, think they don't have enough Māori in the building, it's like (laughter) (token) the token receptionist for one hour a day."

"Too often we do the noho marae, we do the weeks hui, okay I know all about Māoridom because I've done it for a week."

This raised the importance of what participants referred to as local governments' commitment to 'Kaupapa Māori', or Māori issues and aspirations, and ways of doing things based on tikanga.

"He came to our kapahaka, our gala days, he came to all that stuff, and it was like real cool. (Is he Māori?) No, but he things to kaupapa Māori. (Yeyah)."

"Yeah that's what it comes down to, I reckon like they don't have to be Māori but as long as they're willing to be involved."

"He had some sort of, um, that aroha that [name of previous councillor] had, you know towards Māori. . . a few more like him in city council that would be great."

Many participants questioned how much representatives in areas with a small Māori population would concern themselves with Māori issues.

"Will the candidates in [place with low Māori population] care, feel that they need to be, not that they want to, but that they need to be clued up on Māori issues? Or are they gonna see that as um, you know, something that a [place with high Māori population] person should be worried about?"

Overall, participants considered the commitment of local governments to Māori and Māori issues of utmost importance. This was essential to people's sense of belonging and connection to local government.

"It's like they change it all the time but they have no meaning, do you know what I mean? Yeah bro, there's no Māori ones anyway, that's all I know. (Laughter)."

### **Sense of Belonging**

Some participants who abstained from voting did so because they did not have a sense of belonging to the district in which they were enrolled to vote.

"I'm not voting for any local government yet, cause, why should I? My home is back there. (Vote for our council back home). Yeah."

Many participants agreed they were only interested in engaging with local government in the district from which they considered their home / tribal area. For example, they were interested in engaging with local government about iwi resources.

"You still take a bit more interest in your iwi, what's going on in your iwi, or what's going where you do consider home. (Yeah)."

"Yeah, when you've got that interest in it, when you've got land or a home there, yeah you make sure your home and everything's alright."

"Like your awa, those rahui, those kinda things. . . Marae, that sort of thing, urupa, all of that. (Yeah)."

There was a level of concern with participants about the authority of local government over Māori resource issues, such as use and care of land and waterways. This motivated them to engage with local government in the area where they were from.

"If they're gonna throw the sewage out onto the land bro, if they're gonna throw raw sewage out onto the land and they're gonna pump that raw sewage into the lakes where you get your eels and all that kind of stuff, corse they're gonna vote on it."

Some participants who lived outside their iwi area did not engage with local government politics because they felt it was not their business, but the business of mana whenua.

"Oh I thought the iwi, um, you know, the local iwi. . .?"

Many participants who were unsure of their role were interested in exploring what their relationship was to local government, and how they could contribute in that sense.

"Because there's a lot of Māori staying away from their iwi and for them, staying in other towns and areas . . . where's that link for us? As manuhiri to be involved?"

Other participants felt a sense of responsibility to support mana whenua by becoming active and supporting their interests in local government.

"I don't have the same connection here, but I still tautoko the whānau and the iwi that are here, respect what they've got going on."

"I believe while I'm here um, te wairua o [name of iwi] has helped take care of me, because I reside here, so those things are important to me and I really do respect that."

## 5.2.2 PARTICIPATION BY CITIZENS

Participants' comments about other factors affecting their participation revolved around two key issues: accessibility of local government, and the perceived effectiveness of their participation.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of local authority staff and elected representatives was an important issue for all participants. Many participants had the impression that assistance from local government would not be easy to access.

"But you'd have to like, um, do it a certain way, you'd have to probably file in the papers to get the councils attention aye? I don't think, like, going into the council building is gonna help you do stuff."

"You'll have to give detail, detail, and probably put up ten thousands reports if you want something. (They won't just come over and fix it). (It'll all take weeks)."

Some participants were frustrated as they felt local authorities did not make it easy for the 'everyday person' to access, input, or participate in local authority decision-making.

"And the times that the meetings are on, you know, are not for normal everyday Joe Bloggies down the street who might be interested, who might have a bee in his bonnet, but doesn't know how to access that."

"Nah it's bad, because even if they do, the fact is that, at the end of the day, that's the impression that we're getting, is that they don't, they don't make it possible."

Some participants, however, felt that the other pressures such as employment had affected citizenship behaviour and values, such as engaging in local politics and accessing local government.

"We are now too busy running around trying to earn a living that we don't have time for family values and for the benefit of the country. . . Got no time to do anything else."

"Everyone's so busy, and our society has made us busy. (Yeah). And um, you know, it's difficult."

"So for me, even for me, I know how to access it. . . but I'm still too busy."

## Effectiveness

Some participants felt it was important to access local government and participate in processes such as voting, because they wished to exercise their rights and not waste the opportunity.

"Yes I do vote... because I just don't wanna waste it, but that's just me, and from my whole whānau. . . to me those are the things close to my heart that, every reason that I get involved in what's happening in my community."

"I just believe, that in society, it is my right to vote, and I don't think I can stand up and moan if I haven't voted but it is mainly practical things, so I suppose ah, so I want to, I vote for people, 'cause I want to see people that have the same values as me."

"Some people will vote for someone, but I'm quite stubborn, I'll vote against someone, if I don't like any of them, then I'll choose the lesser evil and push for them to get in, um, that essentially is a vote against all the rest who I think are worse. (Laughter)."

Most participants agreed with this view. However, some had a lack of trust and faith in the effectiveness of the local government system to represent their interests, which deterred them from participating in any way.

"Sometimes that's when they have the fake promises; it's like when they go into government they go 'oops, forgot about that one'. You know? It's a bit sad."

"No, I wouldn't vote. I don't have any confidence at all in the system, that's it."

"Promise you the world and deliver nothing".

Certainly participants felt discouraged by other groups that had been unsuccessful in their attempts to participate in local government decision-making.

"It's really discouraging to read and to see that there was a [place] preservation group, and that there was a [place] action group, and you know, not being a participant just being an audience, it's really discouraging to see both those groups fail because the council didn't listen, and that discourages participation."

Participants felt this was unfortunate, as all agreed that they did think local government was important, and a place they would access *if* they thought a successful outcome would be reached.

"If I knew there was an answer there, some hope there, yes I would."

### 5.2.3 ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS

When discussing the efforts of local government to engage citizens in their processes, participants raised the issues of accountability and local government priorities.

#### Accountability

All participants had concerns about local governments' level of accountability to its constituents. In particular, participants felt they were not genuinely consulted about council decisions, but more informed of them after the decision-making was finalised.

"I still think if they have an idea, it's already sorted before they send everything out. (Really?). Yeah. (It's true)."

"If they had more a sense of belonging, or a sense that they can influence things, rather than this idea (oh yeah) that the decisions have already really been made and it's all a bit, it's a bit of a charade."

For those participants who had been involved in consultation, there were high levels of frustration as most reported they felt their contribution was undervalued.



"What they say, you know, that's just it, what they say goes, what you say, it's not gonna matter."

"Because we do consultation government style. Let's make a decision, send a word out, get the input, too late, we've already made the decision, but we'll accept your whakaaro. That's consultation really isn't it?"

Many participants felt elected representatives and candidates lacked integrity, as it appeared they were only interested in engaging with citizens during election campaigns.

"The candidates comes out and everyone just turns away and starts eating their lunch or whatever 'cause we know that they're only here because its election week."

"They don't go and hui with their people until it's election year, guaranteed they'll be there on their front door step trying to shake (yeah) their hands and promise you the world, and as soon as you sign them over then you never see them for the next three years."

"The only power we've got is in a voting year, and then you know one voting year is over, we've got no power until the next voting year, you know?"

Many participants felt accountability to electors after elections was one of the more serious issues with local government.

"You get like these pamphlets in your mail every day (yep) and what they stand for, and then you only find out if you read the paper about who got where and that. But they never like, you know, send you another sheet introducing themselves and saying that they're the ward representative, or if you're keen to see them."

"They need to be held accountable for it 'cause that's why people vote for them. But they get in, and all of a sudden they've forgotten, or their tongue's tied, and that's not what I voted for, I voted 'cause you said this and if you're not going to do it then to me you're a liar."

Most participants were frustrated that local government then did not make a greater effort to engage citizens, but instead placed the onus on citizens to try and participate.

"Then they come out and blame the voters for not being involved! Rather than looking at their own responsibility."

"Why should we do the mahi when they're gonna get paid for it? (Yeah). They need to put themselves out there I reckon."

### **Priorities**

Some participants felt accountability of local government was low because their priorities were in funding, not community needs.

"They've developed a system where its user-pays and who has the most money has the most say."

Many participants felt that, as a result, the council was interested in hearing and engaging with those who controlled resources in the community, instead of the community itself.

"Our bosses and our owners, and the people who have the shares."

"Cause you've got a million dollars sitting in your bank or whatever, then they'll make sure they get your vote. (Okay, mmm). (And ignore the rest of us)."

"Yeah it seems like the councillors and that hang with the top people. (The big wigs). Yeah the big blokes . . . really it's the community that they should be like worrying about. (That's right)."

Many participants felt that this both reflected and further entrenched a growing societal focus on economics rather than social goals.

"It's about competition, you watch the news, it's all about how many dollars, and they glorify the dollar, and it's not about the dollar it's about the people."

As a result, participants' general impressions were that local government was not interested in meeting communities' needs. Instead, there were concerns that wealthy residential areas in the city got more attention from the council, whereas the lower-socio economic suburbs where many Māori lived did not have their needs for services and infrastructure met.

"The ones who need to vote, the ones who aren't voting, are the ones who most need the vote, 'cause of their needs."

"I've never seen judder bars in [name of place]. (No). (Laughter). (True story)."

### **Central government responsiveness**

Participants' views varied on how central government politics affected their interest and views on local government. Many felt a rise in national Māori issues enhanced awareness at the local level.

"People who weren't into politics and you know, didn't really know much about it, when they heard that that was going on a lot of people started to ask why? And, um, debate happened and people became a lot more informed about what was going on."

Some participants expressed that central governments lack of responsiveness to Māori issues caused them to lose interest in political engagement, including at the local level.

"Like, far, one thing little enough was, is the hikoi. We did that and they still went along with it, do you know what I mean? So if we were to say something, they're still gonna do it."

Some participants commented, however, that national politics did not have an effect on their views of local government.

"Issues like that aren't connected with local body, um, government . . . local body for me personally is more about, um, what day my rubbish is collected and you know, whether or not they're chopping down thirty trees in the [name of place]."

Because of the level of activity and publicity at the national level, many associated Māori issues, including those to do with the Treaty of Waitangi, with central rather than local government.

“So those things are important to me and I really do respect that, but I just don’t, it doesn’t really register in my head as quickly. If I think Māori issues, I think of the government taking care of them rather than the council, it’s not intentional, it’s just the way.”

Other participants, however, intrinsically linked national level politics to local government, including the push for more representative, accountable government.

“We can look at local government but it’s the whole system that needs to change and its no use just changing here in this area if you want changes do it from a national level.”

## 5.3 WHAT CAN PEOPLE RECOMMEND FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

### 5.3.1 IMPROVING THE INFORMATION FLOW

Participants highlighted an improved flow of information, and user friendly and relevant information and services, as a key means to enhance Māori knowledge of and participation in local authority decision-making.

#### Information where it matters

Participants expressed the need for local authorities to be more effective in their communications. All participants felt increased coverage by the media would improve information flow from local government to citizens.

“You know maybe making ads on tv. or the radio like ‘its really important for everyone to vote’.”

“Because some people have regional station aye? (And there is regional tv.) and regional tv. sometimes does stuff about the local government.”

In particular, the raising of local government profile on national television was suggested as a way to enhancing citizen knowledge, interest, and participation in their local government.

“They should just do one big generalised local council thing (yep yep) ‘cause then it wouldn’t really be favouring anybody, just educating.”

Participants stressed there were many opportunities that local government could take advantage of to provide information to communities.

“Yeah, probably just at sport events. (Oh yeah).”

“At work places (work, yeah) at companies, oh, like at big workforces, like where they can speak (that would be a good place) smokos and that. Just like, you’d be talking to like hundreds of people, not just one or two, and um like, have all their attention. (Yup).”

"That's where a whole bunch of us are there in one hit, and we have about three or four of them during the week, so I mean going to there. (You just like, grab a mike and everyone will pay attention). (Aye?) (Yep)."

### **User-friendly information and services**

In response to the question of how to improve communication to citizens, all participants agreed that use of the technology would improve information flow about the local authority, elections, planning and other council business.

"Oh definitely through video (huh?) dvd video, because when people like receive these in the mail the first thing I do is go alright government you know I'm not even interested in reading it."

"It's technology you know that's our youth it's technology maybe we can target them with CD ROMs, videos and getting information out there put it on play and there you are you appear 'hey I'm running for blah blah' you know maybe like that or like so they're in your face."

Many participants stressed the importance of the nature of the information provided. Both the content and the language used were identified as important factors in communicating information and securing the interest of citizens.

"They go "oh, there's a meeting for something" you know and you don't really... I mean if you have 'twenty three million dollars' on top of that paper, the headlines, we'd be like 'what the!?' You know, and then we'd go to the meetings."

Many participants stressed the importance of the nature of information services provided. In particular, participants emphasised the need for friendly and attentive people on the first contact line for council services. This would encourage further participation as the reputation of the local authority grew as being accessible and welcoming.

"When you go into the council you can ask and it's having user-friendly people there. A lot of them need to take a kiwi host course you know."

"If someone says 'hello' to you, 'how can I help you? Where would you like to go?'"  
"They have a person who just stands there at the counter and greets you (yeah)... and will direct you to the main reception area or will get the person for you, that's probably all they need at the council."

### **5.3.2 ENHANCING PARTICIPATION**

All participants emphasised the need for 'making participation easy', 'making participation meaningful', and incentives to participate, as essential to enhancing citizen participation.

#### **Making it easy**

All participants expressed the need for local government to tailor the means to participate to better suit them. In particular, participants commented that because people have busy lives, local government needed to make it easy for them to participate.

"We are too busy, and our lifestyles make us busy, um, but I also agree with something said earlier, and that is we are still expected to go to them, they don't come to us."

"Cause like normally there's like quite a good response for those things on the street (yeah surveys). But if it was just like anywhere, and it was easy enough to go do it, I would do it. (Why haven't they thought of that before? 'Cause everyone knows that). (Laughter)."

Many indicated that they would spend the time considering local government issues, but that local government needed to make the effort to reach out to them.

"Yeah, they should have researcher people that come door to door. (Door to door!?) Yeah. (Good idea)."

"I would say something if someone came around and asked... but other than that I wouldn't go down to the council. (Door to door man)."

Most participants saw the visibility and accessibility of local authority representatives and services as vital to fostering participation.

"Like if each councillor had a little office in each ward that was plain to see or plain to read, you know was in somewhere, not high profile, but yeah."

"Not 24 hours, but maybe 'till 9pm?"

"And their hours were on the door and if you had an issue come on in, you know, let us know, but that was in the ward, in your local area."

Again, participants agreed that the use of technology, not only for information flow, but also for a way citizens could participate, would also improve citizen participation. All participants agreed that email, text, and use of the internet would be a useful way to gain information and to vote, for example, and would definitely improve voter turnout.

"I'd use the net."

"I'm a great e-mailer (oh yeah) so I can email."

"Yeah email (oh yeah) I'm always checking my email. That way it would be way easier."

### **Making it meaningful**

Some participants indicated they would like to be consulted by local government through forms such as an ideas paper, (which, for example, could come in either mail form or as a web page on the internet), where citizens could go over the different options and indicate which they preferred.

"You know how they usually have, um like, a paper, saying, oh yeah, should we do this, or get a, kind of like a vote? (Yup). They didn't do that. See it in the news and next week we're gonna rip up the [place], so that's what they did. (Mmm)."

"If they're gonna change the [place], which affects everybody in [place], why couldn't they send a letter to everybody saying this is a proposed plan for what we're gonna do? So that, then you know it's gonna happen and be involved in changes or whatever."

Again, the nature of how local government sought to engage with citizens was raised as an important issue. As with the distribution of information, the means for giving feedback had to be user-friendly and approachable.

"Like you know more of a laxed environment like, you'd feel more comfortable talking to them then."

In general, engagement by local government with the grass roots level of communities was seen as essential.

"You actually want them standing and talk to ya. (Yeah, yeah). (Oh yeah?). That's how it sinks in to me anyway."

"I think being approachable, being accessible and in um, being able to listen, you know listen to peoples concerns, not sort of just go "oh yeah, oh yeah, I'll deal with that later" or put it on a pile of paper and you know, she'll be right mate."

### **Incentives to participate**

When asked about how participation levels could be increased, many participants also raised the notion of incentives. This was about capturing the interest of citizens.

"Giving out free stuff. 'Cause they had like [name of political party] party and [name of political party] and they were giving out free stuff and I went to the [name of political party] party just 'cause they had jaffas."

"(Are you gonna vote for them 'cause they had jaffas?) No. But it was something, because I'm standing there eating the jaffas and she's hard out talking so its their tactic, chocolate puts to ticking."

"Like if there's text voting and you get ten free texts I would definitely vote. (Laughter)."

Participants felt they had to be shown how they would benefit from engagement with local government, as their experiences had not necessarily convinced them of the value of participation.

### **5.3.3 IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT WITH MĀORI**

When asked about how Māori could be more effectively engaged, participants discussed representation by Māori, commitment to tikanga, and overall structural / cultural change.

#### **Representation by Māori**

Most participants indicated that greater Māori representation would lead to greater interest and participation by Māori, due to perceived higher levels of accountability.

"Everybody would be more informed about council because then you'd be more familiar with the people (yeah), like the Māori representative you know you'd be more familiar, you know you'd be more familiar with the Māori people then we actually might get some information about what they're doing and stuff."

"Yeah more Māori I reckon."

In particular, participants again raised the need to have more Māori working in local government, which was seen as vital for improving the responsiveness of council services to Māori and encouraging more Māori to access local government.

"If they were really on-to-it they would encourage more Māori into the system just because of the service that we can provide, the manaakitanga that's in us."

"I know its sorta, I don't know what you'd call that, 'whānau orientated', well just go with whānau (safe) yeah (laughter) why? Like if I reckon if we did see more Māori in there then it's like a motivation thing. (Yeah)"

All participants agreed that concern for Māori interests by all representatives, not only Māori representatives, was critical. As a result, participants identified support for Māori issues from all councilors as an essential to engaging Māori interest and sense of confidence in local government. This was expressed by participants through the notion of 'kaupapa Māori'; representation of and commitment to Māori issues.

"The issues that deal with Māori the up-skilling that should be part of their job description."

### **Commitment to tikanga**

In addition to Māori issues, participants also indicated that increased commitment to the tikanga of mana whenua was essential in appropriately engaging Māori, and would lead to increased respect by Māori of local government.

"And the understanding of, um, like, whanaungatanga, just sort of making connections with people. I mean, te reo Māori is a good tool to have, but it means nothing if you don't have a talk to people, and people need to go and see that they're out there doing the whanaungatanga."

One suggestion of participants was that local authorities should meet regularly with mana whenua for the purposes of tikanga training, and maintaining regular contact so each representative was familiar and held accountable to mana whenua issues.

"Here in this particular iwi sit down with them understand them, you know so they know where they are coming from, at least once a week every two months or something, just so they don't lose that contact and that thing with the Māori just so our Māori liaison officer is not all by himself."

All participants agreed that engagement with Māori by elected representatives at the community level was essential. This was expressed through the notion of 'kanohi kitea', a seen face at times and places relevant to Māori communities. This in turn would increase Māori interest in engaging with local government representatives.

"If you had the choice of going to a meeting to meet a candidate or doing an assignment, I'd rather do my assignment. (Hello). But I s'pose if they held it on the marae, they might catch my interest."

### **Structural change**

Some participants indicated they felt major structural change was required to successfully engage with and secure full confidence and participation from Māori. This focused around power sharing in decision-making.

"I'm all for it as long as they're willing to share that power position and decide on that then that's fine but if they're going to maintain all the decision-making and determine what happens. . ."

"Run two boards at the same time, aye, so at the local council where people are in partnership and there is a representative on both sides Non-Māori and Māori and then you have your caucus which is like your support group that check you and then make you accountable."

Many participants considered a sense of involvement and shared decision-making in local government as both a democratic and Treaty of Waitangi issue.

"If you've got a 50% of like, 50% of your population or whatever of the area is Māori: it should be like that anyway. Because that's why we signed the Treaty. (Yep, no that why we signed the Treaty). (It's just, yeah). (True that!) That is why we signed the Treaty. (Yeah it's a joint partnership). (Yeah)."

### **5.3.4 IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY TO MĀORI**

Improving local government accountability to citizens focused upon the ways for citizens to keep elected representatives accountable, and how local government can keep connected to its communities.

#### **Holdng elected representatives accountable**

Participants were, overall, concerned with how local government could be held more accountable to its constituents. Many participants felt, for example, that low-level voter turnout was unacceptable as it undermined the legitimacy of those elected, and their decisions. Participants felt it was important for something to be done about it.

"Under 50% I think they should have just reviewed it and did it again, that's just crazy. (Really?). Yeah, that's not even a whole voice, do you know what I mean? If it was over 70 then oh yeah sweet passed it but under 50 that's just crazy."

"Why haven't the government done anything about it then? Since they've known the numbers have come down?"

Of those who had been elected, participants were interested in how citizens could hold representatives accountable to their communities and, for example, their election pledges and other commitments.

"So even councillors can't call a, snap / no confidence vote?"



## **Connecting to communities**

All participants indicated that initiatives that involved people at the grass roots level of communities or one-on-one were more successful than others in both connecting to citizens and raising morale.

“Yeah well, all public events. They gotta be in their jeans and t-shirts same as everybody else. And make themselves known; introduce themselves as who they are.”

Community meetings were seen as a good way to engage Māori as it facilitated community discussion and decision-making, as well as ensuring local government representatives remained in touch with their community’s issues, needs, concerns, and desires.

“Yeah that does speak volumes especially when you’ve got direct contact with him.”

“Yep. If they put on a feed or something, (yeah – I will go!) then there’s an incentive to go along. But you see (someone else has said that) the feed is not about kai, is about a process, about building of relationships.”

Door-to-door contact was also seen as very positive, as it not only was an effective form of communication but also fostered awareness of local decision-making with citizens through an increased sense of connection, approachability, and accountability to citizens.

## **5.4 THEMES AND COMPARISONS ACROSS DIFFERENT GROUPS**

### **5.4.1 URBAN MĀORI**

Participants living in urban areas made several suggestions for local authorities to improve their connections with and accountability to Māori. This included making a genuine connection with the community, and utilising community skills, networks and resources.

## **Connecting with the community**

Participants from urban areas felt representatives’ connection to the community was paramount in boosting the relevance and viability of local government. Many of these participants felt the ways elected representatives connected to the community revealed a lack of sincerity and authenticity.

“I’ve seen councillors go to rugby matches in their bloody suits and shiny blue black shoes (oh), and they’re looking like (ridiculous) yeah.”

Accountability was an important issue for this group, as many felt that the current system of local government representation does not work. These participants felt elected representatives failed to be accountable to their electors by keeping in touch with communities. It was felt representatives must show their accountability to their community by leading community development initiatives.

“Once they get chosen are they actually out there doing stuff for the community? I really don’t know aye, there’s not too much that’s says that they do.”

### **Tailoring to the community**

Participants from urban areas stressed the need for elected representatives to know and be involved with their communities. Only in this way can local government then be able to tailor community development to what the needs and desires of those communities are.

“It is really about recognising the diversity of our communities so that maybe what the community in [place] or [place] or something wants is going to be different from what they want down in [place].”

Participants from urban areas believed that, if representatives were more involved and familiar with their communities, it would lead to greater recognition and utilising of the skills and strengths of the community.

“Local groups have their own way of operating and their own existence and their own processes rather than making it quite a general generic process for the whole country.”

### **5.4.2 RURAL MĀORI**

There were several perspectives raised by participants from rural areas that were specific to living in a rural community. These revolved around being more closely connected to local government and its representatives, and its effects on overall satisfaction with and confidence and trust in local government.

#### **Closer connections**

Participants from rural areas were in general happy with their local government. This was due to a greater sense of connection with their council, representatives, and local government services.

“And you might be more likely to know the people (yeah yeah)”

“She turned up. . . and it was just like she was a joe bloggs, she still had nice clothes on, but there was completely no airs and graces about her being the head of the council.”

Because of this connection, overall rural participants felt more people were interested in becoming involved with local government. This also reflected in the number voting in elections, for example.

“Oh, you get a quite a high turn out, yeah, you do, because it’s small it’s a little tight community.”

#### **Positive view of local government**

Participants who were from rural communities were generally happier with their local council than participants from urban centres. In particular they expressed greater levels of confidence and trust in local government representatives and processes. This was due to greater levels of accessibility to, and the accountability of, local government representatives to their communities.

"If I was to get there and say something to our local council they're doing a good job. (Oh, cool). (That's great)."

### 5.4.3 RANGATAHI MĀORI IN THE WORKFORCE

Young participants in the workforce raised several points about connecting to people like themselves. This included better representation and means to participate that were suited to young people.

#### Representation

Young participants in the workforce felt representation by young people was important in ensuring a diversity of views was heard in local government.

"Why don't we just get like all the young people? 'Cause that's the majority of [name of place]."

"Why not aye? Won't you have a few young ones a few old ones a few middle age and the ones, you know? Why not mix it up? (That's really, that's a good point)."

"You need a mix up there. (Ok yep). Even someone in their twenties would be good enough for me, (yeah) you only see forties and fifties. (It might make you vote)."

Further to this, young participants stressed the importance of getting representatives from across different sectors of the community to reflect the diversity of citizens in the community.

"Know they're probably from like, rich area, flash house, (oh yip, not [place]) yeah. I think they should get, yeah, like, people like me. (Laughter)."

Participants expressed this would make local government both more accessible and approachable to young Māori workers.

"'Cause if a young person got in there it would be really good. Dressed like everybody else in the hood. You know sort of more casually, but not absolutely hori. (Laughter)."

#### Means to participate

Young participants especially expressed a need for local government to use technology to raise the level of knowledge, interest and participation for younger people.

"Me and my mate thought up of an idea like why a lot of the young people don't vote, it's because you can't text vote or email vote. (Good point that's such a good point). Yeah if you could text your vote no problem aye. (Or even email vote)"

Young working participants emphasised forms of participation that utilized technology, such as cell phone and internet, as important because it was tailored to what young participants knew and were comfortable with.

"But the point is, it's familiar as well, like it's you know what to do, and if said "text, name such and such" of what you want, that's so much easier."

#### 5.4.4 RANGATAHI MĀORI IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Young participants from the tertiary sector highlighted the positive effects of tertiary education on their participation with local government, and other issues particular to young people.

##### **Positive effects of tertiary education**

Some participants engaged in tertiary education mentioned that their knowledge of local government had been stimulated by being in the tertiary environment.

"I wouldn't have had any idea of that until coming here and learning about it, through, you know, my degree. . . I suppose doing the programmes or papers where they teach you how to access local body politics and government."

Participants in this group commented further on how increased knowledge positively affected their confidence to engage with local government.

"We come to an institution like this and learn a few bit more things about how the world works. So were a bit more comfortable than some of our whānau to, you know, say to someone 'hey nah that's not right. . .'"

This did however lead to a concern for other young Māori who may have less access to information and knowledge of this type.

"Nah I'm lucky in that respect because of my degree, however I wouldn't have know that otherwise. (Yeah)."

This raised the importance of public education programmes to ensure all young citizens had information and could develop knowledge about how to access and participate in local government if they wished to.

##### **Young voters**

Young participants in tertiary education indicated they would participate more if local government made it clear their participation is important and valued.

"Like, if it is really important they should be saying."

Approachability of local government representatives and service people was an important issue for younger participants. They were uncomfortable with accessing the council if they did not know anyone there.

"Strangers. (Strangers!) I'll be like 'Oh hey I'm [name]'. And they'll be like 'oh who?' (Laughter)."

The experience of some rangatahi gave them the impression that their contribution was not valued. This subsequently deterred many of them from further participation.

"They're not like really hearing what you have to say and stuff, and just 'cause like your younger it's just like oh, just brush it off (sad)"

Many young participants suggested Māori and youth liaison officers to make local government more approachable and accessible to rangatahi.

"That's why our Māori Liaison officer is there . . . it's only an idea that, aye, that it might, it might work."

"Cause it's like, if they can make it there then you know, its um like (a role model) yeah a role model, and its ok because if you say something wrong, which I always do, (they wont shut you down) yeah, like 'do you have that?', 'oh nah I didn't bring it' 'oh that's ok'."

As shown above, there were several key messages across all groups, and messages emphasised by particular groups. These messages included recommendations from participants for the development of the local government sector. These ideas are presented in the next section as key messages, focused on information flow, engagement, and accountability.

## 6. KEY MESSAGES

Out of the focus group data, the key messages that emerged we 'tested' with participants at the hui where we presented the draft report. These are messages for those who are tasked with enhancing Māori representation and participation in local government. This includes, in particular, policy-makers and decision-makers in central and local government, the Electoral Commission, local government managers and local authority elected representatives.

### 6.1 Information flow: "knowledge is power"

Participants demonstrated that they had some knowledge about local government, but they also acknowledged gaps in their information and understanding about local government structure, elections, and other decision-making processes. Participants emphasised that, on its own, knowledge will not stimulate greater local political participation (voting and getting involved in other consultation and decision-making). Yet, participants also stressed that good information and an improved citizen understanding of local government is necessary for fostering Māori participation and representation, so the 'know how' is there should the desire to participate arise. Comprehensive year-round citizenship education programmes about local government and local issues are required for this, not just an effort to raise citizens knowledge of how to vote at election time every three years.

The way information is packaged - whether it is about a submissions process, rates, infrastructure (such as water services, waste, transport, etc) - is critical. To increase the flow of information to Māori, and in particular rangatahi Māori, participants emphasised the need to utilise a range of technologies to provide information from, and about, local government and its activities: internet, email, text messages, CD-ROMs, and DVDs. This also included an increased media coverage, such as radio, television, and news on the internet. Information, however, has to be user-friendly both in terms of the mechanism by which it is transmitted, and the format and content. The language that is used is vital - the language of young people, te reo, and appropriate visual images are critical to effective communication by and about local government processes and issues. The point of this is not that any particular technology should be adopted but that a range of media should be used: a flexible approach so that for those who prefer texting or the internet, that is a known option for receiving and providing information.

The focus groups participants may not fully represent the wider group from which they come, to the extent that people who come to focus groups may already have some motivation to find out and discuss issues about local government. However, they do articulate a set of aspirations to have better information, and greater opportunities to exercise choices, about participation in local authority decision-making.

### 6.2 Engagement: "diversity is the key"

Issues raised by participants repeatedly raised the issues of diversity; diversity of methods for citizens to participate, diversity of methods for local authorities to engage citizens, and diversity of representatives. Māori themselves are a diverse group. Engaging Māori in local authority decision-making therefore requires a range of methods and media. As emphasised with the flow of information from local government, participants recommended local governments create a range of avenues through technology through which to engage citizens and capture their interest. Option for rangatahi Māori youth to participate in decision-making

processes, such as voting on elections and other matters, through email, the internet (online voting) and texting was seen as a much needed development. Participants were positive this diverse approach could transform the interest and participation of rangatahi Māori with regard to local political matters.

Older participants complained that too often councils efforts to engage communities rely on familiar methods such as written material in newspapers. Instead, participants recommend council staff and elected members go out to forums and venues where Māori meet and interact. In other words, council must come to citizens, rather than presume citizens will come to the council. Kanohi kitea – to be seen out and about, interacting with the community – is vital to engaging citizens. Appropriately-skilled staff on the front-line of local government service delivery was also emphasised. Training such as Kiwihost for people on the ‘front desk’ was noted as playing a role in enhancing Māori access to local government services and information, as was the employment of Māori youth liaison officers to enhance the approachability of local government in their efforts to engage rangatahi Māori.

Some of these views would not be held solely by Māori, nevertheless it would appear that distance between voters and representatives is a factor in people’s level of interest. Distance occurs at both a physical / geographical, and psychological / cultural level. The latter is usually exacerbated when voters and representatives are from different ethnic groups.

### **6.3 Accountability: “integrity is everything”**

Enhanced integrity and accountability of local government is essential in securing full participation by Māori. Integrity and accountability are achieved through various ways. Very significant steps must be taken to ensure equitable Māori representation. The presence of Māori councillors is a key factor in stimulating Māori interest. At the same time participants emphasised strategies to be taken up by Pākehā councillors. A solid commitment to tikanga, (i.e. regular noho with local iwi to maintain contact), and kaupapa Māori (Māori issues and aspirations) is required. Power-sharing, and exploring different decision-making structures, is another element in building Māori interest, faith and trust in local government. This is a pre-condition for strengthened Māori participation.

As well, the design of participation processes and opportunities needs to incorporate Māori values and ways of interacting. To date, participatory processes and opportunities have embodied Pākehā protocols. This has both discouraged Māori from participating, but also projected local government to Māori as an entity not worth participating in. Māori need to be shown that local government commitment to Māori participation, Māori representation, and Māori issues, is substantial. Māori are otherwise uninterested in making an effort to participate in a system that ultimately will have little outcome for them and their families.

This is the message of “wharemoa te rakau, ka mahue”. An entity whose systems, processes and representatives lack substance and accountability is not worth accessing or participating in, and in fact is best left aside so as not to risk harm or waste resources and effort. Local governments must transform themselves into places where people are of central importance: “He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata!”.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research gave Māori a voice by the way it provided a space for Māori to explore their knowledge, experiences and perspectives of local government. This existing knowledge base and set of experiences is rich and provides a building block, but information and participatory processes must be designed in culturally-responsive ways. Local government offers Māori unique ways of being politically active and more attention needs to be given to how this political engagement can be more effective. To date, research has focused almost entirely on Māori participation in national politics and parliamentary elections, yet the nature of participation in local government is different and provides additional ways of pursuing political goals that should be harnessed.

The research highlighted the importance of working cross-culturally to address the challenges of fostering Māori participation and representation. This means that the dominant Pākehā majority must look at ways of doing things differently and stepping outside of established ways of engaging Māori and in particular Māori young people. Māori recognise the opportunities and benefits associated with participation in local politics, but are unlikely to become involved if local governments are not more concerned with Māori communities and their issues. Māori have high-level knowledge of politics and political issues, and will readily receive information about local government and engage in formal political processes if their perspectives, styles of communication, needs and aspirations are genuinely responded to.

Just as participants of this research expressed scepticism towards local governments' engagement of Māori, they were similarly sceptical of any positive effects this report would have on local governments for Māori. Lack of political will in the past to advance Māori local political self-determination within local government structures has stifled Māori participation. This holds true today. Seeking full Māori participation and the changes required to secure such participation must be re-conceptualised as an effort for enhancing social justice and the democratic legitimacy of our local body institutions. In this way, local governments can be leaders in creating a better future with Māori, for all New Zealanders, in Aotearoa.

No reira, tukuna ēnei korero – ki te ao mārama e!



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# **RANGATAHI MAORI!**

***What's up with the City Council?***

***Why hook them up with your vote?***

***What are they doing for you?***

***Or more like, what could they be doing?***

**We wanna know what YOU think!**

**Hui rangahau about rangatahi and their views  
about local government.**

**If you keen to join in the korero, txt Veronica Tawhai 027 3054882**

**or email [V.M.Tawhai@massey.ac.nz](mailto:V.M.Tawhai@massey.ac.nz) at MASSEY UNIVERSITY.**

**NAU MAI E NGA RANGATIRA O APOPO!**





*College of Humanities and Social Sciences*

Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
T 64 6 350 5799 extn 2816  
F 64 6 350 5681  
<http://sspsw.massey.ac.nz/>

## **Māori and local government**

### Information sheet for participants in focus groups

Thanks for expressing interest in being part of a focus group for this research. Dr Christine Cheyne a lecturer, and Veronica Tawhai, a postgraduate student, both at Massey University in Palmerston North, are carrying out the research. The project aims to find out what people like you know about their local authority and whether or not they get involved in local decision-making

As a member of a focus group you will take part in a group discussion at a venue that we organise, but will be convenient for you, and at a time that suits you. We would like you to be available for up to one and a half hours although it might not take quite that long. At the focus group we will ask you to sign a consent form that indicates that you are willing to take part.

What we will do in the group is have a discussion about the local council for the area that you live in: how much people like you know about what it does, how interested they are in voting, and having a say in local issues.

There will be around 10 people in the group and it will be interesting, even fun hopefully! We will also provide some food and drinks (non-alcoholic!). You may ask any questions about the study at any time during participation. The group discussion will be taped (audio-tape) but we won't be identifying you or any individuals or organisations when we write up the results of the research. Also, we will ask people in the focus groups to agree not to name other individuals in the group. You have the right to ask for the tape to be turned off at any stage and you also have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of the research.

Afterwards we will send you a summary of what came out of the focus groups. We won't be sending out a transcript of the whole discussion because it is not practical for any one person to amend the group discussion.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Application 04/143. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz).

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact:

Christine Cheyne  
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Ph (06) 350-5799 ext 2816, email: [C.M.Cheyne@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.M.Cheyne@massey.ac.nz)



*College of Humanities and Social Sciences*

Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
T 64 6 350 5799 extn 2816  
F 64 6 350 5681  
<http://sspsw.massey.ac.nz/>

*What do people know about local government?*

**Focus Group Participant Consent Form and Confidentiality Agreement**

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that the Focus Group responses will be audio-taped and that I have the right to have the audio-tape switched off at any stage.

I agree to not disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group.

I am happy to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name**

**printed**

.....

## Format of focus groups: guideline for facilitator

**Karakia / Introduction:** Facilitator and note-taker to introduce themselves and give brief overview about the research, why it is being done, and what the focus group is about.

**Housekeeping:** sign consent form, check everyone has information sheet, is comfortable, is OK with the timeframe - no more than 1.5 hours and the tape-recorder being used, location of exits, toilets; any questions

**Ground rules:** confidentiality of what goes on within the room, everyone to have the chance to have a say, no right or wrong answers, no need to agree or disagree, cell phones on silent ring or off, any other rules that participants would like.

### Participants introductions

#### Karakia / Food

#### Discussion starters / questions:

What local authority do you live in?

Do you know the name of the Mayor of your Council?

Do you know the names of all the current Councillors (other than the mayor)?

How easy do you think it is for people like you to find out about who the local councillors are and what they do?

Have you ever voted in local elections and what do you think about voting in local elections? Do you know people who wouldn't vote? If so, what do you think is the reason why they don't vote? Would anything persuade them to vote?

How interested would you say people like you are in council decision-making?

What are some of the reasons for that?

Have you had any contact with your council? If yes, what for? How did you find it? If not, would you feel that you knew who to contact and how?

Do you think the Council makes it possible for ordinary people to have a say about issues that it is making decisions on?

Can you think of anything the Council can do to improve the opportunities for people to have a say in council decision-making?

There is some concern about the low numbers of people who vote (less than 50% of the voting population in some areas). What, if anything, do you think should be done about this?

Are there any other issues you want to raise or comments you would like to make about voting and about what the local Council does.

**Conclusion:** Thank everyone for their time. Ask for any feedback/questions. Check that we have correct contact addresses for sending summary. Finishing karakia.



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# WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW AND THINK ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

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Debrief Hui – discussing the preliminary findings of our Marsden research  
*Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Kainga Rua, Massey University Palmerston North.*

## AGENDA

1. Mihimihi
2. Introduction by Christine and Veronica
3. Everyone grabs a kai
4. Background to overall Marsden project
5. Background to Maori focus groups
6. Description of preliminary findings
7. Discussion
8. Any further questions? Comments?
9. Where to from here? Report development
10. Hui ends

---

## WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW AND THINK ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

### Discussing the preliminary findings

---

#### 1. WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW? KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

##### KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Generally know the name of the council, city or district.
- Generally know some past mayors, people who have run for mayor, and sometimes mayor.
- Have some knowledge of the other councillors, but not really.
- Know that council is who to go to, but don't know exact person / committee / contact, etc.
- Knowledge about local mayor and councillors comes from: newspapers, actions that gain publicity (e.g. Mayor's wife lent car to gang), word of mouth about developments (e.g. CBD upgrade), and characteristics (te reo Maori speaking, etc).

##### KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROCESSES

- Confusion around the enrolment process: what, when and where?
- Confusion around the voting process: who, what, when and where?
- Low awareness on other means of participation outside of voting and council meetings.

##### EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Minimal interaction with local government beyond general council issues: rubbish bags, recycling, water, dog registration, transport.
- Some voting, but overall low level participation in voting.
- Information is hard to get, and when acquired itself is hard to read / understand.
- Not enough information or familiarity with candidates - leads to choosing not to vote or feelings of meaningless voting

##### IMPRESSIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Poor integrity / accountability:
  - High interaction with constituents before election time and only at election time.
  - Citizens are not consulted on council decisions, but are rather told about them.
  - Promises are not kept, but councillors are not made answerable to their communities.
  - System does not reflect or is in touch with communities or their issues.
  - Priorities lie in funding, not with communities needs and / or desires.
- In terms of Maori in local government concerns / impressions that:

- o Maori representation and opportunities for representation is tokenistic
- o Maori representation is dangerous for Maori in terms of their wellbeing
- o Recognition and implementation of tikanga Maori is tokenistic
- o Bottom line Maori don't participate because there is no manaakitanga

## 2. WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK? IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### WHAT WORKS

Mocachino with the mayor

### WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Candidate 150 word statements and photos

### IDEAS FOR BETTER INFORMATION TO CITIZENS

- Increased media coverage: newspapers, radio, and television.
- Use of other technologies to spread information: internet, email, cell phones, cd roms, dvd's.
- User-friendly information: written to appeal to the everyday citizen.
- User-friendly services: kiwi host for front desk people, etc.

### IDEAS FOR BETTER PARTICIPATION / CONSULTATION OF CITIZENS

- Use of technology to vote: certainty that emailing and texting will improve voter turnout.
- Ideas papers to each citizen in the form of a voting paper, to gauge citizens' support
- Grass roots community initiatives: community meetings, door to door
- Incentives for participation: food and networking in communities.
- Recognition that people are busy / have busy lifestyles: council must come to citizens, not other way round.
- Approachability and accessibility is the key at all levels.

### MESSAGES TO COUNCIL FOR BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY TO MAORI

- Enhanced Maori representation will lead to enhanced participation by Maori
- Real commitment to tikanga, i.e. regular noho with local iwi rangatira to maintain contact
- Develop better structures to reflect power sharing in decision making with Maori
- Kanohi kitea: to be seen out and about is everything.
- Manaakitanga is a must.

### OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Need for recognition that knowledge is power: information flow must be enhanced.
- Citizens are unable to participate - councils must enable citizens to participate by developing better processes.
- Integrity of local government must be renewed: developed through people and processes, structures and systems reflecting the people, needs and aspirations of their communities.

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# WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW AND THINK ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

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Review hui – discussing the draft report.

5.30pm Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006

(the new) Kainga Rua, Massey University, Palmerston North.

## AGENDA

1. Hui open
2. Welcome back! by Christine and Veronica
3. Catch up from everyone
4. Kai
5. Update on research
6. Description of draft report
7. Feedback?
8. Where to from here?
9. Hui close



Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
T 64 6 350 5799 extn 2816  
F 64 6 350 5681  
<http://sspsw.massey.ac.nz/>

*College of Humanities and Social Sciences*

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006

Regarding: Focus Group Research on Knowledge and Experiences of Local Government

Tēnā koe [name],

ngā mihi ki a koutou. Ko te tumanako kei te ora tonu! Greetings to all - we hope everyone is well! Especially as we creep closer to the year's end and the beautiful summer weather!

The time has come in the research project for you to review the draft report. Please find attached to this letter a copy of the report and a self addressed envelope. Those who were at the review hui gave important feedback about the layout and general look of the report. Now, it is important to gain your feedback as to whether you find the report interesting, easy to read, and most importantly, a reflection of what you contributed to the research. Please feel free to take a pen and write all over the draft, including:

- making further comments about the layout and general look of the report.
- circling anything you find confusing, or think isn't written clear enough.
- writing comments where you feel changes need to be made to the content.
- writing any additional comments you would like to make.

A self-addressed envelope is provided for you to send back the draft report with your comments. We also welcome anyone who would like to meet face to face to discuss this. If you could please send back your feedback, or organize meetings, before the end of November that would be great. Due to the large number of participants, it may be difficult to incorporate everyone's changes (especially if there are conflicting accounts). However, it is the intention of this research to provide an as-close-to-as-possible picture of the experience shared through the focus group process. After the draft is finished, we will contact you again regarding dates for the hui whakakapi to present the final report and close the research process.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us! We hope you enjoy the report.

Ngā mihi,

Christine and Ronnie (Christine Cheyne and Veronica Tawhai)

*Tíheí maurí ora, kí te whaí ao, kí te ao marama!*

*The presence of:*

*(name) and whanau*

*is welcomed at:*

*The presentation of the report*

**WHAREMOA TE RAKAU, KA MAHUE**  
**Māori and Local Government: Knowledge,**  
**experiences and recommendations.**

*Thursday 26th July 2007*

*Kainga Rua, Massey University.*

*2.30pm (refreshments provided)*

*RSVP by 5pm Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July to*

*Veronica Tawhai on [veronica.tawhai.1@uni.massey.ac.nz](mailto:veronica.tawhai.1@uni.massey.ac.nz)*

Appendix 8: Update newsletter draft template – for print and electronic post out, and to feature on the web (participants will be emailed link).

Wharemoa te Rakau, Ka Mahue:

Report on Māori and Local Government

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## UPDATE NEWLETTER

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Mihi and intro

### WHERE HAS THE REPORT GONE?

Report of information dispersal

- Copies to local authorities
- Workshops / presentations to local authorities and community groups
- Conferences
- Journal article
- Any media reports

### HAVE THERE BEEN ANY DEVELOPMENTS?

Report of developments for Māori in local government

- Any further legislation or policy changes
- Any initiatives by local governments in their engagement with Māori citizens, such as hui, citizenship education/engagement programmes, website development, etc?
- Any developments in local governments provision of options for young Māori to participate, such as texting, online voting or email?
- Any further research happening anywhere?
- Anything else?

### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Where to from here???





# He wharemoa te rakau, ka mahue. Maori engagement with local government: Knowledge, experiences and recommendations

Cheyne, Christine M.

2008-01-31T20:37:01Z

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10179/7723>

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