

SavePapakura.com submission to Local Government Commission:

Auckland Governance arrangements

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SavePapakura.com was formed by concerned members of the local Papakura community following a public meeting held in Papakura during May 2009 at which over 1000 people attended. Savepapakura.com with support from the Papakura District Council has held a number of public meetings since May to keep people informed about the proposed changes to Auckland Governance and to ascertain the communities views on the various legislative changes proposed. All these meetings have been well attended by the local community and SavePapakura.com has also maintained an active website to further inform and support the community through this period. The group supported the public to put submissions into the 2nd Bill and is now encouraging people make submissions on the proposed boundaries for the wards and boards.

Following a recent public meeting to gauge the views of people in Papakura to the proposed boundaries SavePapakura.com submits the following comments:

Separate Wards (and Councillors) for Papakura and Manurewa

The proposed Papakura–Manurewa Ward with two councillors is opposed by SavePapakura.com. From views expressed at the recent public meeting it was clear that:

- people wanted their own ‘single member ward’ for Papakura. This would then allow Manurewa to have its own single member ward as well.
- there was concern around the population distribution within the proposed ward. Given the 44,000 people in the Papakura area versus the 86,000 in Manurewa it would be very difficult to get a councillor elected who lived in Papakura, this would effectively deny Papakura a distinct ‘community of interest’ any representation on the Auckland Council.
- Papakura has always been its own municipality since the township was formed in the 1800’s and has grown and developed with a much stronger identity than Manurewa

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- There was concern given the proposed ward would be larger than the general election electoral boundaries that this hardly reflected 'local' or even regional governance
- There was a desire for the existing Papakura District Council boundary to be boundary for a Papakura ward.
- Papakura is a regionally significant area given the residential growth anticipated, the business land development anticipated and the further development of rail and roading networks, so it is considered very important there is at least one councillor at the regional table that has some understanding of the Papakura District

Auckland Councillor representation levels too high, impeding accessibility

SavePapakura.com understand the constraints placed on the LGC in regard to equitable population size for the wards and the +/- 10% rule. However given that the commission has in several cases proposed ward boundaries that are not consistent with this rule it demonstrates a fundamental flaw in the government legislation and highlights that clearly 20 councillors is not sufficient to represent 'communities of interest' and 1.4 million people. We would urge the commission to make a recommendation to government to increase the number of councillors to a more realistic representation level of 25 – 30 councillors. Such an amendment we believe could be made through the 3rd Bill.

The legislation is also silent on the process to occur into the future as growth occurs around the Region. As the population that each councillor represents continues to grow all be it disproportionately around the region there will further distortion of the +/- 10% rule. We believe a better process would be a ratio of 1 councillor to a population of 40- 50,000 people with the flexibility to increase the number of councillors in particular wards once the population is exceeded or create another ward depending on the local situation.

We recognize that the existing Papakura District boundary does not currently meet the population requirements that the LGC was aiming for in its proposal, and several suggestions were made at the public meeting to overcome this including:

- using the Papakura telephone exchange prefix number (29) as the basis for a Papakura Ward, eg those households with phone numbers beginning 298, 296, 292
- including the Clevedon area in a Papakura Ward
- using the current Papakura electorate boundary with Manurewa as the boundary for a Papakura ward (ie Mahia Rd, The Gardens, etc)
- recognizing future population growth that is anticipated in the areas of Takanini and Karaka.

We do not believe that wards of the size proposed will encourage voter participation. People are less likely to know the candidates seeking election or feel their vote will have any influence on the outcome – and this is particularly the case for Papakura residents when they know they are likely to be outnumbered by Manurewa voters. It is well recognized that smaller councils tend to have higher voter turnouts than larger councils. Voter apathy and poor local representation is already seen in the DHB elections and other elections such as the AECT.

Papakura Local Board and its boundaries

We support a Papakura Local Board and believe this reflects the strong and passionate local identity that Papakura people have to their local community. However we believe the boundaries for this board should be extended to include the area currently covered by the Papakura District Council boundary. We believe that the rural areas of Papakura should remain within a Papakura Local Board and not become part of a 'Franklin local board'. Many of these areas are very close to the Papakura township, people living in these areas would shop in Papakura and receive a range of other services from Papakura. Some of these rural areas are also destined for urbanization in the near future and will not be 'rural' for much longer, the remaining rural areas tend to be rural lifestyle blocks and countryside living rather than large farms.

Two subdivisions for fair representation and electorate participation

We feel there should be at least 2 subdivisions for voting in the Papakura Board with the railway line being the division line. Having 2 subdivisions for voting would ensure fair representation from across the District and also reduce the cost of election campaigning – which can be a barrier for some good candidates from poorer areas of the community.

Should you be of a mind to adjust the ward boards so that Papakura has its Ward, then we would anticipate that the board would have the same boundary. We would also support a subdivision of the board to recognize any areas of Manurewa incorporated into the Papakura board.

Local Board Member representation levels too high, discouraging community consultation

We believe the representation levels for Local Board Members are too high. In the current proposal it is around 1: 9,000. We believe this is too high to reflect the 'local' nature of these boards, the expectation that board members will be part-time, and the legislative requirements on them to engage with the community. We believe a ratio of one board member to 5-6,000 people is more realistic which would mean that a Papakura Board should have representation of 7- 8 board members.

Representation

The report from the LGC has highlighted that the constraints placed on them by the legislation will not have a positive effect on the notion of local democracy or local governance.

- the representation ratio for Auckland councillors is too high, with proposed populations greater than central government MP's
- the representation ratios for local board members and the size of some local boards is too high and fails to reflect the 'village' decision making that some in government talk about.
- The representation levels are much higher than seen in many comparable democracies eg in Britain there is one elected official for every 2,600 people.
- This will not encourage voter participation
- The costs to campaign are likely to be a major barrier for many good candidates
- The legislation is silent on what will occur in future representation reviews. The proposed cap of 20 councillors for the Auckland Council and 9 members for any local board will continue to erode the sense of 'local democracy' as the communities of the Auckland Region continue to grow.

Name of Ward and Board

We support the name of 'Papakura' to be used for local board and any ward representing the community of Papakura.

We believe the boards should be called 'community councils' to reflect the role they will fulfill and to also avoid the confusion that currently exists when talking of 'wards' and 'boards' as the terms sound very similar.