

28 May 2024

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Sir/Madam

**Submission from the Manawātū District Council on the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill.

The Manawātū District Council has voted not to disestablish our Ngā Tapuae o Matangi Māori Ward for the 2025 triennial local body elections. The voting was 11-1.

The Council accepts that Māori wards may not be the optimal representation arrangement for all local authorities and iwi across the country, however, this is a decision for each local authority to make. We do not support the intention of this Bill to remove that decision from us.

Manawatu District Council, by majority decision, prefers that a decision to have a Maori Ward or not, be decided in the same way as other Wards, through the Representation Review process which allows for public consultation, rather than by referendum. The voting was 7 for, 2 against, and 3 abstaining. This voting reflected the divided views of the community on the efficacy of the representation review process.

Council's twelve members have diverse views on the fairness, equity and equality of Māori wards, as does our community. Each time a conversation around Māori wards has arisen, it has caused major friction within our community and between the Council and iwi.

Despite the diverse views of members, iwi and community, our Council wishes to focus its efforts on building relationships with our iwi and tangata whenua. We have seen significant improvements in Māori engagement with our Long-term Plan process with a significant number of submissions from marae, kura, Māori service, kapa haka, hapu and iwi.

Please feel free to contact myself ([helen.worboys@mdc.govt.nz](mailto:helen.worboys@mdc.govt.nz)) if you have any questions or concerns about this submission.

Yours sincerely

