

CONFERENCE

TIMETABLE FOR METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

ADDRESS & NOTES @ AUT UNIVERSITY | INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY
28 APRIL 2009

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Chair of the proceedings. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this metropolitan governance timetable conference. And congratulations to the Institute of Public Policy for calling this timely conference. (My name is Uluomatootua Saulaulu Aiono. I was born in Apia, Western (at the time) Samoa. My parents brought our family to Auckland on a banana boat in 1960.)

I have eight to ten minutes – and I am not sure what to do with all that time that I have been given to fully inform you about the perspective of Pacific Islanders and what they may be thinking, or should I say fearing about the advent of the Auckland super city.

Maybe I should give two of my minutes to Prime Minister John Key and local Government Minister Rodney Hide so they can fully consider the implications. But I doubt if that will do them or us much good.

No matter how any section or constituency of our community slices or dices the future prospects of a super city and the implications are clear:

1. minorities individually and collectively face greater uncertainty than the rest of our community
2. there is little certainty that individuals within minorities will be better off
3. even significant minorities (Pacific Islanders; Asians) feel powerless to communicate effectively and organize effectively so as to participate in the change that is underway.

There are eight main cultures in the Polynesian triangle and this includes our country Aotearoa, New Zealand. But in total there are 24 sovereign territories, comprising the Pacific island nations. Excluding New Zealand's population the other 23 Pacific island nations have a combined population 9 million; 6 million people live in Papua New Guinea. This leaves 3 million people spread over 22 tiny, sovereign, Pacific island territories. New Zealand has by far the largest number of Pacific Islanders - numbering 300,000 (2006 Census 260,000+). This makes Auckland into the world's largest Polynesian city.

In New Zealand most Pacific Islanders live as nuclear families rather than the extended families which are the primary social structure in the Pacific Island nations. The extended family structure is so strong that it has withstood a century of Polynesian immigration to Aotearoa. For all that we may say about Auckland being the world's largest Polynesian city, it only has 300,000 Polynesians. In the Pacific's 22 sovereign island territories there are three million Polynesians who, because of their ties to NZ's, being mostly Auckland's, Polynesians, may as well be living in NZ. The huge, unending, flow of remittances from New Zealand back to the Pacific Island nations is testimony to the strength of international extended family which bind Auckland's Pacific Islanders to their Pacific Island origins.

For example, as Kiwi as I am, and as sheltered as I was from, Pacific Island family affairs, by my parents, I have not escaped the extended family ties to Samoa. On Beach Road in Apia you will find a magnificently refurbished church – originally set up by the London Missionary Society – funded by six-figure remittances from my cousins and me in Auckland.

This, then, is the complicated, extended, social structure from which Pacific islanders are observing and trying to participate in the gathering changes associated with an Auckland super city.

Remember that:

1. In respect of post school qualifications more than seven out of ten Pasifika people have none.
2. Real wages growth was eight tenths of one percent for Pasifika during the six years from 2000 to 2006 compared to three percent wages growth for New Zealand as a whole.
3. Almost seven out of ten Pasifika people work in low-skill jobs compared to five out ten for the country as a whole.
4. Pasifika people are under-represented in the business services sector.
5. Thirty three percent of Pasifika people have a post school qualification compared to forty five percent of Maori compared to sixty two percent of other ethnicities.
6. Pasifika people have significantly lower life expectancies than others in New Zealand: 4.8 years less for Pasifika males and 4.4 years less for females. Pasifika adults are two times more likely, than the average, to be obese.

In Auckland as at June 2007 about 665 Pasifika per 10,000 Pasifika residents were apprehended, by Police, for crime. This compares to apprehensions of 527 per 10,000 Pasifika in the rest of New Zealand.

You can understand why, in respect of a new super city, Pacific Islanders are worried about their ability to get jobs, hold down jobs, make rent & mortgage payments, send money to extended family members back in the islands, pay school fees and stay out of gaol.

With the best will in the world, the good work performed by many sections of the Ministry of Social Development and the Department of Labour – despite their large budget appropriations – have had little significant effect on those sad headline statistics for Pacific Islanders in New Zealand and especially Auckland.

They won't get any better with a super city in which minorities feel little, or no, sense of community; feeling that it is pointless, or that it is so difficult as to be pointless, to make minority feelings and voices a legitimate part of the super city change process.

In Manukau City, with its ethnicity services focused Council, Pacific Islanders are wondering what benefits will be taken from them. Free swimming pool entry? What about the Auckland International Airport dividend stream?

In Waitakere City with its green and social advances character, Pacific Islanders are wondering what new costs and cuts they will face if their city's distinctive Westie lifestyle is changed.

Pacific Islanders in North Shore seem to be confident, like their Mayor, of resisting anything that they don't like.

And Auckland City's Pacific Islanders seem to be bolshie & bullish about their city's ability to make the best of any negative effects.

With respect to the super city there is a rising sense of antagonism towards the Government because many Pacific Islanders feel threatened by the uncertainties of a super city but the same Pacific Islanders do not have the relative freedom to take time off from work and participate in rallies and meetings RIGHT NOW to make a difference and be heard in the lead up to October 2010.

If the tangata whenua of our country can be offered such disdain – and be dismissively treated, indicating that the Royal Commission's three seats recommendation is bollocks - then how will our (Auckland) region's other minorities fare?

As the Chairman of the Pacific Island Chamber of Commerce Inc I can tell you that my Chamber and its members recognise the need to mobilise and organise the Pacific Island constituency. We are fast tracking the incorporation of the Auckland Pacific Forum which sponsored the inaugural Pacific Island Economic & Social Transformation conference just before last year's election.

The Auckland Pacific Forum, under establishment, has begun to take the lead in mobilising Pacific Islanders in the Auckland region. This is additional to the efforts that the various Pacific Island groups are making within each of the four main cities.

In spite of the obstacles, Pacific Islanders know that effective participation is essential to the good foundations of a Super City's governance.

For the sake of our Auckland region you must take the initiative. You must, individually and collectively, exercise the necessary insight so as to engage and incorporate our country's, more particularly, our region's, Pacific Islanders and minorities in the lead up to the new super city.

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