



Local Government Commission
Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Commission Tasks and Approach
On Auckland Governance Reforms

Introduction

1. The Commission is required to determine regional, ward and local board boundaries as part of the reform of Auckland governance. Particular requirements relating to these boundaries are prescribed in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill but in general they are to be determined on the basis of reflecting relevant communities of interest and achieving the intent of this legislation.
2. The purpose of this paper is to set out the proposed general approach to determination of boundaries for the information of interested parties who may wish to make submissions to the Commission on these issues. The focus of this paper is on ward and local board boundaries as the boundaries for Auckland (i.e. the regional boundaries) are more prescribed in the Bill though, to a large extent, they still require identification of relevant communities of interest.
3. The paper:
 - a) sets out the requirements for wards and local boards in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill as reported back to Parliament;
 - b) sets out the Commission's approach to identification of communities of interest; and
 - c) brings together these requirements and approach as they will apply to Auckland.

Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill requirements

4. The Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill requires:

- a) determination of the boundaries and names of wards for Auckland for the election of 20 members (the total number of wards has not been prescribed so, subject to b) below, wards may be either single- or multi-member wards;
- b) establishment of single-member wards for the areas of Rodney and Franklin Districts that are to remain in Auckland;
- c) wards to be established so as to provide, as far as is practicable:
 - i. effective representation of communities of interest within Auckland; and
 - ii. fair representation for electors (defined in terms of the population of each ward divided by the number of members to be elected by that ward being within +/- 10% of the total population of Auckland divided by the total number of elected members excluding the mayor – referred to as the ‘+/-10% rule’¹)*
- d) the ward boundaries to coincide, as far as is practicable, with local board boundaries;
- e) determination of the number (between 20 and 30**), boundaries, names and number of members (between 4 and 9) of local boards so as to provide, as far as is practicable, effective representation of communities of interest within Auckland;
- f) establishment of separate local boards for the Waiheke and Great Barrier Island communities;
- g) determination of subdivisions for local board areas, if seen as necessary, and in which case subdivisions that, as far as is practicable, comply with the ‘+/-10% rule’.

(* the Bill also provides that if the Commission considers that effective representation of communities of interest so requires, wards and subdivisions of communities may be defined and membership distributed between them in a way that does not comply with the +/- 10% fair representation requirement.

** the Bill also provides that the number of local boards may be outside this range if the Commission considers this is required for effective representation of communities of interest.)

¹ On the basis of a total regional population of 1.4 million people, this requires representation per elected member (excluding the mayor) of between 63,000 and 77,000.

Identification of communities of interest

5. For the purpose of undertaking representation reviews, the Commission has identified the following three dimensions of communities of interest:²
- *perceptual*: a sense of identity with and belonging to an area or locality;
 - *functional*: the ability of the community to meet with reasonable economy the community's requirements for physical and human services;
 - *political*: the ability of the elected body to represent the interests and reconcile the conflicts of all its members.
6. In relation to these three dimensions, the following factors can be applied:
- a) *Sense of identity with or belonging to a community*:
- geographical features (e.g. hills, rivers, landforms)
 - other features which are seen to form barriers between areas (e.g. arterial roads)
 - particular landmarks (e.g. significant buildings and monuments)
 - land use and settlement patterns including: urban and rural land use, residential and commercial use, particular growth or development areas, other particular uses (e.g. DoC land)
 - demographic characteristics including: socio-economic, ethnic and age characteristics of the local population
 - shared values tying a community together or commonly referred to characteristics associated with an area based on, for example, history, local culture, an articulated 'community vision', or the ways in which local residents articulate a sense of identity and/or emotional connection associated with 'their place'
- b) *Ability to meet the need for (council and non-council) services*
- catchments of council-provided services including: parks and reserves, community and recreational facilities such as libraries, swimming pools, community centres, council service centres, civil defence/emergency management centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux
 - infrastructure networks including: roads and the 'three waters'
 - public transport networks
 - non-council provided services and social focal points including: shopping centres ('village hubs' rather than large regional malls), schools, places of worship and religious congregation, health

² Based on a paper *The Concept of Community of Interest* (1989) prepared by Helen Fulcher for the South Australian Department of Local Government

centres, marae and other Māori and ethnic services, non-council recreational and sporting facilities and services

- significant centres/locations of employment

c) Political arrangements for representing and reconciling interests

- existing community and local government boundaries including networks of resident/ratepayer associations, community board areas, territorial authority wards, regional council constituencies, local authority boundaries
- central agency jurisdictions including public health organisations and DHBs, Police districts, Work and Income offices
- iwi/hapū interests
- parliamentary electorates.

Application to Auckland

7. The Commission will need to apply these dimensions and particular community of interest factors in order to determine the number and boundaries of wards and local boards for Auckland within the constraints prescribed by the Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill.
8. The Commission will also need to take account of certain other provisions in the Local Government (Auckland Council) Bill particularly in relation to local boards. These include:
 - the purpose of local boards of:
 - enabling democratic decision-making by, and on behalf of, communities within the board area
 - better enabling the promotion of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities within the board area
 - the requirement for decision-making to be shared between the governing body (i.e. Auckland Council) and the local boards
 - the functions, duties and powers of the local boards:
 - non-regulatory activities allocated to the board
 - identifying and communicating the interests and preferences of the people in the board area
 - identifying and developing bylaws specifically for the board area
 - local activities agreed with the Auckland Council.
9. Clearly the boundaries of local board areas should aim to facilitate the purpose, decision-making role, and functions, duties and powers of local boards.

10. A further consideration will be the relationship between wards and local boards given the number of both may be different but that boundaries are to coincide as far as is practicable. This relationship should aim to encourage, amongst other things, effective representation of communities of interest.
11. The Commission will also apply considerations that it uses in other areas of work such as in local authority representation reviews. In these reviews, in the absence of a statutory definition, the Commission has identified the following factors in considering what constitutes effective representation of communities of interest:
- avoiding arrangements that may create barriers to participation, such as in voting at elections, for example by not recognising residents' familiarity and identity with an area
 - not splitting recognised communities of interest between electoral subdivisions
 - not grouping together two or more communities of interest that share few commonalities of interest
 - accessibility, size and configuration of an area including:
 - would the population have reasonable access to its elected members and vice versa?
 - would elected members be able to effectively represent the views of their electoral area?
 - would elected members be able to attend public meetings throughout the area, and provide reasonable opportunities for face-to-face meetings?
12. In addition, the Commission will assess the relative merits of single- and multi-member wards. Single- and multi-member wards may both have a place in a particular district or city and the balance between them will depend on the specific characteristics of the area concerned.
13. Arguments in favour of multi-member wards include:
- electors have a greater choice of candidates
 - the larger the ward/the larger the number of positions, the more likely there is to be diverse representation of minority groups
 - the larger the ward the more likely electors feel they have a greater say in the running of the city
 - the larger the ward the easier it is for councillors to act in the interests of the city as a whole
 - electors have a greater choice of councillors they can approach following the election

- more councillors in a ward allows them to cooperate, share workloads and specialise in areas of interest and expertise
- multi-member wards may result in enhanced accountability based on the choice of councillors that electors have to approach on issues and their ability to share workloads and specialise on issues.

14. Arguments in favour of single-member wards include:

- fewer positions/candidates may have a positive impact on voter turnout
- single-member wards are likely to enhance representation of small distinct/isolated areas compared to being part of a larger ward
- single-member wards may reduce time and resource costs of campaigning for candidates
- single-member wards may encourage electors to be better informed on candidates and their policies due to fewer candidates and who are likely to be better known
- single-member wards may improve accountability in the ward by ensuring a closer link between residents and the councillor.

15. As a starting point in its consideration of all the above factors relating to the boundaries of wards and local boards, the Commission will assess to what extent existing territorial authority wards and community board areas will assist identification of wards and local board areas for the new council.

Conclusion

16. The Commission is seeking the views of interested parties on the appropriate balance of the factors identified in this paper prior to its determination on wards and local boards for Auckland.