

Submission: UNDRIP Submission



Te Kaunihera Māori o Aotearoa
New Zealand Māori Council

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**UNITED NATIONS
DECLARATION ON
THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES**

continue to languish in the low wage growth part of the economy. That means we are less likely to be able to keep pace with the cost of living and we are the majority of the homeless population. And we are not homeless just because we are unemployed. We are one of the largest per head of population groups of the working poor. Over the years little has been done to truly address these, and more, indicators because like all things Governments come and go, implement different policies and very Maori are not at the table when it comes to the design of anything – let alone co-design. And this is the perennial problem that Government can solve almost overnight. To accept their Treaty partner has the solutions that challenge and confront us. Instead we often turn to the Waitangi Tribunal for what we call Kaupapa claims -where we attempt to hold the Government to account about the wrongs of the past, the broken system, in order to build for the future. And yet, successive Governments do not respond to the Waitangi Tribunal recommendations and reports. A recent assessment of the Kaupapa (issues) claims saw two thirds not responded to – some going back more than twenty years. The sad reality is that Maori representation in this current Parliament is high but do our representatives have a voice?

A few years ago the former National Government, pushed by the former Maori Party in coalition Government signed up to the UN's Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous peoples. But they did so by not developing a framework to measure performance against the 46 articles. That was clearly wrong but in many ways was could have been an indication that at the time data to measure performance against is scant or kept confidential. This nation is good collecting data for purposes mainly dealing with financial outcomes – for example, was the money expended for the intended purpose as opposed to did the purpose have the intended outcome.

The New Zealand Maori Council intends on changing that. As one of the only Maori organisations with its own Act of Parliament (the Maori Community Development Act (1962)) we intend to not only measure the performance of the Crown against each of the 46 articles, we intend to hold them to account until change is seen and not just believed to have been heard. For the last seven months we have been collecting the data relevant to each Article as a standing point from the number of claims not responded to by successive Governments when it comes to the Treaty through to our children in State care. From the environment and protection of our land and water ways to the very things that binds us as a people – our culture and language.

It is against these same yard arms that the United Nations also must measure the Crown and successive Governments. It is against this common set of data that the public service, the only consistent functionary of Government to survive the election or loss of a political party, must be held to account not just the Government.

It is interesting to note that it was this Government that considered writing the current Maori Community Development Act out of existence suggesting that it needed to be modernized. It is a damning indictment on such a move that such a Government may want to ask the question if it is they that need to reassess their position instead of appearing to silence the only elected Maori representative voice with an Act of the Parliament.

We as a people must stand against any Government that would seek to water down the representative rights of all Maori wherever they may be. We as a people must stand at the door and beat it down until the Government accepts we are not a people to be sidelined as a matter of convenience and we as a people deserve to be treated with the same respect as successive Governments expect of themselves.

You as a United Nations, must stand with us to monitor, assess and evaluate.

As we move forward it must be clear that the interest of the New Zealand Maori Council is in Maori Affairs and through Maori Affairs we must build the movement towards change, we must ensure that change is not only talked about but delivered and the Crown, through the Government whoever they may be, must take stock.

IN the cold hard light of day we are people who are not going anywhere. This is the land of our Tipuna, of our ancestors. This is the land of our tamariki and our rangatahi and it is from the lessons of the past we must build for the future.