
REPORT 2
(1215/13/IM)

**RATIFICATION OF MAKARA/OHARIU COMMUNITY
BOARD SUBMISSION TO WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL
2006 REPRESENTATION REVIEW**

It is recommended that the Makara/Ohariu Community Board:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Ratify the Makara/Ohariu Community Board submission to the Wellington City Council 2006 Representation Review.*

Attached is the Makara/Ohariu Community Board Submission to the Wellington City Council 2006 Review.

REPRESENTATION REVIEW

Submission by the

MAKARA OHARIU COMMUNITY BOARD

The Makara Ohariu Community Board ('MOCB') will address the options presented in the Representation Review consultation document in respect of a Wellington Rural Community Board in two parts:

- 1** MOCB supports retention of the existing Makara Ohariu Community Board in preference to the establishment of a larger Wellington Rural Community Board.

- 2** In the event that the Tawa Community Board ('TCB') is disestablished, MOCB addresses issues arising around the consequential establishment of a Wellington Rural Community Board ('WRCB') incorporating the rural areas of Takapu and Horokiwi.

BACKGROUND / LEGAL STATUS

Local Government Act 2002

Section 52

Role of community boards:

The role of a community board is to-

- (a) represent, and act as an advocate for, the interests of its community; and*
- (b) consider and report on all matters referred to it by the territorial authority, or any matter of interest or concern to the community board; and*
- (c) maintain an overview of services provided by the territorial authority within the community; and*
- (d) prepare an annual submission to the territorial authority for expenditure within the community; and*
- (e) communicate with community organisations and special interest groups within the community; and*
- (f) undertake any other responsibilities that are delegated to it by the territorial authority.*

The above definition of the role of a community board clearly indicates that the board acts *in conjunction with* its parent territorial authority. A board acts both as a formal channel of representation for its constituents (or 'community of interest') to the territorial authority, and also as a consultative body for information *from* the territorial authority with respect to its activities in the boards area. Outside of that, it is concerned with any matter of interest that impacts on the community. In MOCB's case, this includes sustainable land use and management within rural, residential, coastal and recreational environments.

Core issues in determining the continued existence of the MOCB; or the retention of the MOCB in its current form versus the establishment of a WRCB; are:

- a what community of interest does the Board represent? and**
- b does MOCB's provision of additional representation for a comparatively small number of residents in the Makara/Ohariu/South Karori areas constitute 'unfair' representation as compared to other Wellington District residents?**

1 RETENTION OF EXISTING MAKARA OHARIU COMMUNITY BOARD

a Community of interest

MOCB currently represents residents and addresses land management issues over a large single geographic area of the Wellington District, comprising the southwestern and northern coastal and rural landscapes. This is a single, contiguous block of land, generally referred to as 'Open Space' in many Council planning documents. The land-mass includes the rural communities of Ohariu, Makara, Makara Beach and South Karori. These communities which are linked by a shared rural roading network.

Due to historical connections, the interlinked land-mass and associated shared interests/employment, shared community facilities and activities (farm workers, local contractors, historic churches, equestrian activities, community halls, school, civil defence etc.), a sense of community identity and belonging has evolved across the area.

This is the 'community of interest' represented by MOCB - a matter the Council must take into account when determining the representation review.

Generally, in Wellington, communities of interest have been determined on a 'suburb' basis, i.e. single geographic areas within boundaries based on topography, access and business/shopping centres. The determination of MOCB's community of interest on a similar basis in relation to the single land-mass, topography, roading network and business/shopping centres (Johnsonville/Karori) would be consistent with previous determinations.

b Effective and fair representation

MOCB represents a distinct and separate community of interest.

MOCB is an effective and cost-effective consultation tool.

Distinct community of interest:

MOCB's community of interest is very distinct from most other Wellington urban communities. The ***differences*** include (but are not restricted to):

- large private landholdings (traditionally farms);
- farming activity and employment;
- equestrian and recreational activities;
- non-reticulated water supplies;
- independent sewage disposal;
- windfarm interest and activity;
- specific pest control issues;
- lack of public transport and/or street lighting;
- rural fire management.
- siting of utilities (i.e. Western Wastewater Treatment Plant and pipeline, Transpower cable and pylons).

Many of these matters require that specific information/knowledge be passed from the community to the territorial authority when developing plans and policies, addressing rates issues, processing resource consents, addressing pest management and environmental issues, and managing urban containment. This is a role currently provided by MOCB. Between the 6 members elected to the Board, there is knowledge

of and access to most residents and landholdings in the area, enabling the effective sharing of information.

Cost:

The **cost of MOCB to Council** in wages is \$35,500 per annum (64% from the remuneration pool, the rest from rates). MOCB notes that the \$22,720 currently spent on MOCB from the remuneration pool, if *not* spent on MOCB, would be shared amongst the existing Councillors wages, and that rural ratepayers pay 100% of the general rate even though not sharing fully in all the non-targeted services this covers (i.e. street lighting, public transport, certain capital costs for wastewater etc). In other words, a rates benefit to the residents of the Boards area is not unwarranted.

MOCB considers the \$35,500 money well spent on consultation, information-sharing and 'buy-in' in the rural-area, and considerably cheaper and more effective than other forms of consultation purchased from outside the community. Other costs of MOCB are minor administrative attendances.

MOCB requests and assists with the administration of a \$50,000 minor road improvement budget for the rural area. This was because the rural-roading network never made it high enough up the 'improvements' scale, in terms of urban traffic and pedestrian numbers, to qualify from the usual improvements budget. It is not a direct cost of having the board, but an example of a useful way in which the board can be involved.

MOCB has in the past few years also sought and gained funding for three legal/expert issues, all of which have been important and successful in forming Council policy. One was for a noise expert to address local residents issues in relation to Plan Change 32 (renewable energy rules) and almost all of whose comments were incorporated in the Plan Change. The second was for a legal opinion about the role of boards in resource consent hearings process, and was in response to incorrect Council advice, a matter which it was good for both Council and MOCB to have expert opinion on. The third has been to ensure MOCB remain involved in the Plan Change 33 appeals process up to (and not beyond) the point of mediation.

These can be seen as 'costs' of having MOCB, but are much better seen in terms of Council benefit. Communities have much more 'buy-in' to actions they perceive to initiate themselves, as opposed to actions imposed upon them by 'outside' bodies such

as Council. They are also matters the Council would not necessarily think of or initiate, but the success of the two matters so far proceeded with has shown the money to be well spent. Another advantage is that MOCB is to blame if locally initiated actions go wrong.

Activities of MOCB:

For the record, the following are some of the **activities of MOCB over the last 10 years:**

- contribution to and submission on to every Council plan and policy that effects the rural area and it's residents;
- constructive contribution to the rural rates issue;
- input/liaison on Council pest management;
- input in relation to resource consent applications in the area;
- assistance with grant and funding applications from all sources for community projects;
- assistance for community groups in their relationships with Council;
- organization of Civil Defence supplies, plans and communication systems in conjunction with WEMO;
- working with the rural fire service and making fire permits available locally;
- working with Greater Wellington on pest management, streams, estuary and flooding issues;
- working with recreational groups to arrange access through/use of the area;
- assistance with spending of annual minor road improvement budget;
- representation and explanation of Council policies and issues to the community.

A myriad of both small and large matters are covered by the above general areas. For a practical example, it includes such basic things as keeping the school swimming pool open over summer for community use, arranging public meetings across the areas during the community planning process, and arranging a flood plan with WRC for the residents of Makara Beach and the estuary.

As the pre-consultation exercise indicated, most Councilors and submitters appreciate the value to WCC of retaining a community board for this area, whether it remains the MOCB or becomes the WRCB. Additionally, the interests of the MOCB community are distinct and divergent enough from the majority urban communities to warrant the retention of a community board for the area.

2 (a) DISESTABLISHMENT OF TAWA COMMUNITY BOARD

MOCB prefers the current community board representation arrangements for the Makara/Ohariu/South Karori area. Takapu rural area is currently represented by the TCB, and any issues to do with the quality of that representation is currently an internal TCB matter. MOCB is not aware of Horokiwi rural residents requesting any community board representation.

MOCB submits that under the **present arrangements**, there is not an issue with the retention of the MOCB in its current form.

If TCB is disestablished, then the issue of representation for the rural area of Takapu Valley arises. This area would be defined as excluding land currently zoned rural but planned as part of the northern growth management strategy, so containing only lifestyle/rural blocks. Horokwi rural area would likewise be defined as not all land currently zoned rural. Along with Horokwi and Takapu, there are numerous other pockets of land zoned rural in the Wellington District whose residents might also, in fairness, be given rural community board representation.

MOCB is **not opposed** to a larger rural community board. Representation for all rural areas is preferable to no representation for rural areas, if that is what the choice comes down to.

MOCB does, however, have concerns about a re-definition that changes the MOCB from representing the community of interest/communities in a particular contiguous geographic area, to a board that is **more** representative only of **rural** issues across the district in general. In other words, confining the boards reason for existence to a 'rural' one is to limit its existing rationale, watering down the community boards role, and by association, the character of the community of interest.

MOCB is currently representative of the residents/landowners (and, arguably, 'users') of a specific land area, one part of who's interests is/are rural, but an equally large proportion of which is regenerating, coastal, recreational and lifestyle. It is a community that feels interconnected. Retention of that sense of character and place is important to the local community.

2 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF A WELLINGTON RURAL COMMUNITY BOARD.

If a new board is established to include the rural areas of Horokiwi and Takapu Valley, becoming a 'rural' community board, then the definition of MOCB's community of interest must change.

New community of interest:

The **differences** between the existing community of interest and the proposed new one all stem from the physical separation of the topographic areas of Horokiwi/Takapu Valley from the existing MOCB area. These differences include (but are not restricted to):

- no shared roading network;
- no natural flow between the areas i.e. few work or family relationships, few common historic connections;
- no natural affinity or sense of community with the additional areas;
- no shared facilities;
- limited recreational activities;
- smaller landholdings.

Electoral subdivision vs. voting-at-large:

If the new rural electorate as a whole were to be **subdivided for electoral purposes**, (i.e. Horokiwi residents vote for Horokiwi members, Makara residents for Makara members etc) the respective populations and electoral math only allows the option of **12 board members**. Whilst this would be the fairest system, the high number of board members invalidates some of the cost/benefit arguments in favour of disestablishing Tawa and retaining only one community board. The costs of one 12-member board would be similar to retaining/creating two community boards with 4-6 members each.

Another option is to create 3 subdivisions which allows for Takapu residents to vote for a Takapu member, Horokiwi residents for a Horokiwi member, and Makara/Ohariu/South Karori to vote for 5 members between them (7 board members total).

The MOCB is currently elected at large, and consequently takes a 'middle' position on many issues where there is a divergent view between areas. MOCB attempts to debate and resolve issues before they take the form of submission to WCC, and in the process can lessen the points of difference between communities.

A problem with the 3 electoral subdivisions, is the potential inequality of representation if 2 members of the board act first and foremost in the interests of their constituents, whilst the other 5 members try to find an agreed position between them. There would also be guaranteed representation for two of the Boards areas, and no guaranteed representation for the other three (i.e. in an issues-based election it is possible that either Makara or Ohariu could gain the majority of members with one area being left out).

Although there is no guaranteed equality of representation between the Makara/Ohariu/South Karori areas at present, only the one system is being used, i.e. it is not set-up against a competing system within itself. The representatives each have an understanding of all the areas within the MOCB jurisdiction, and it has not been a contentious issue.

The most practical option for the WRCB electoral process, therefore, is **voting at large**, i.e. all residents of all represented areas can vote for all candidates. It is proposed that one more member be appointed to the Board to allow for further representation and a sharing of the increased workload, i.e. 7 board members in total.

In this case, equality of representation could be an issue with the newly introduced areas. The current MOCB community is used to voting for board members and the communities have independent informal networks for nominating and lobbying for members during election time. Whoever is elected, they will pretty much know the area, or can get to know it quickly.

In the same way that MOCB would not expect the existing ward Councillors of the Northern and Western wards to have a thorough knowledge of the issues of the Makara/Ohariu/South Karori rural areas, the physical distance between the existing MOCB area and Takapu Valley/Horokiwi means no current board member knows much about these areas, nor will be likely to be passing through them. If members are voted onto the board from Horokiwi and Takapu, then all good and well, but if not, they may

be under-represented as it is not likely that a member from the Makara/Ohariu/South Karori area will have any natural connection with them.

CONCLUSION

- **MOCB represents a distinct community of interest in the Wellington District sufficient to be retained in its current form**
- **MOCB is an effective and cost-effective means of keeping information channels open between Council and the community**
- **MOCB has useful dealings with Greater Wellington, WEMO, Rural Fire and recreational groups**
- **MOCB would prefer to retain the Board in its current form but is not opposed to the establishment of a Wellington Rural Community Board**

Ruth Paul

Chairperson

Makara Ohariu Community Board

15th August 2006.