

## **Ethnic People's Advisory Panel End of Term Report 2019 – 2022**

The Ethnic People's Advisory Panel, through the lived experience of its members, provides advice to council's elected members and staff on a range of regional policies, plans, strategies, emerging issues and any other matter of particular interest or concern to ethnic communities. The panel also helps council to effectively engage with people from ethnic cultures.

The members of the Ethnic Peoples Advisory Panel for the current term are:

Mohamud Mohamed (co-chair)  
Eva Chen (co-chair from Feb 2022)  
Carol Guler  
Fatumata Bah  
Farrukh Gul Qaisrani  
Ireen Manuel  
Sunil Kaushal  
Najira Khanan (member until Feb 2022)  
Kathy Yan (co-chair and member until Dec 2021)



From left to right: Eva Chen, Najira Khanam, Kathy Yan, Mohamud Mohamed, Sunil Kaushal, Carol Guler, Farrukh Gul Qaisrani, Ireen Manuel, Fatumata Bah.

The Ethnic People's Advisory Panel during its term was supported by:

Chief Liaison Councillor Dr Cathy Casey

Liaison Councillor Paul Young

Lead Officer Manoj Ragupathy

Deputy Lead Officer Tao Chen

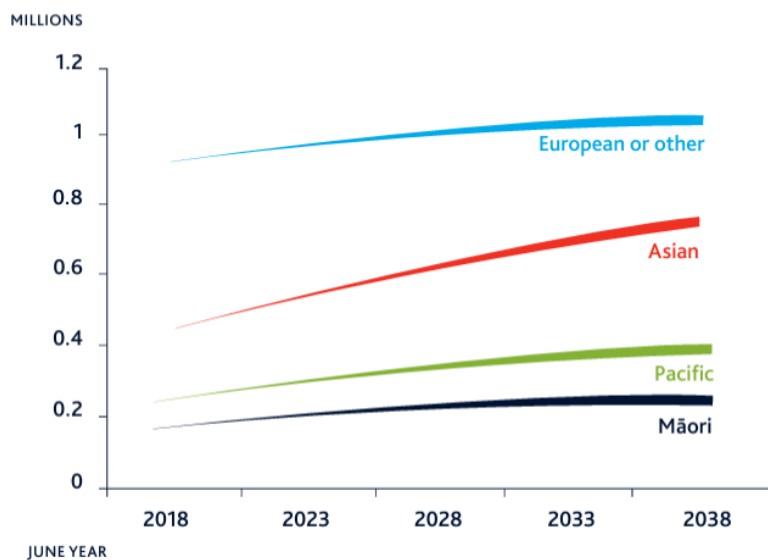
Principal Advisor, Advisory Panels Carol Hayward (until July 21) then Victoria Wicks-Brown Oct 21-)

Governance Advisors: Suad Allie (until Mar 22) then Olivia Boniface (Mar 22-)

## Introduction

### Our panel term

During our term, the Ethnic Peoples Advisory Panel continued to engage with ethnic communities to amplify their voices, experiences, stories and vision for Auckland. Despite challenges imposed by covid-19 we continued to advice council on issues of importance to ethnic communities such as employment, housing, transport, safety, and civic participation. Throughout our term, we felt strengthened by Auckland's diversity and are continually inspired by the growing diversity of Auckland.



### Priorities for the panel

The panel set three areas of focus for the term:

- Increasing the sense of belonging of diverse communities in Auckland
- Increasing the connection between Auckland Council and ethnic communities
- Increasing the representation of ethnic communities in Auckland Council's workforce

The panel also set two focus areas to advocate on:

- Transport and access – safe and clean public transport and eco-friendly options are available for ethnic communities to access employment, educational, culture and leisure opportunities
- Affordable housing – increased housing supply and choices for our communities of greatest need

## Achievements

### Advice to Governing Body, staff and council-controlled organisations

The panel meetings started in October 2020, one year after the 2019 election. Despite the impact of the pandemic the panel has engaged and provided advice on a significant body or work online and in person:

- three open meetings
- 11 workshops
- 8 cross panel climate change working group hui
- 9 cross panel elections working group hui
- 4 thriving community strategy working group hui
- 8 panel co-chairs forum
- All demographic panel member cross-panel meetings on Three Waters, Auckland Council Engagement Guidelines, Housing and Homelessness, Thriving Communities Strategy, Governing Body/Executive Leadership Team/Co-chairs Forum

Much of this work took place online on Zoom and on Teams.



## Overview of work throughout the term

5 Oct 2020	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic development post COVID-19</li> <li>Regional Parks: Review of the Regional Parks Management Plan</li> <li>Strategic Briefing: Auckland Plan 2050</li> </ul>
7 Dec 2020	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auckland International Cultural Festival: advice, encouragement / promotion of festival, inclusion of activities</li> </ul>
9 Feb 2021	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established work programme and strategic priorities.</li> <li>March open meeting focus and priorities</li> </ul>
1 Mar 2021	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10-year budget (2021 – 2031): provided feedback</li> <li>Discussion re presentation to Finance &amp; Performance Committee workshop on 21 April 2021.</li> <li>Disability Operational Action Plan</li> </ul>
17 Mar 2021	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long Term Plan survey: Discussion re panel collecting feedback from their networks.</li> <li>Draft Affordable Housing Advocacy Plan</li> </ul>
17 May 2021	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Development Action Plan 2021 – 2024</li> <li>The Future of Auckland ethnic people's advisory panel website</li> </ul>
5 Jul 2021	Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement session with Meng Foon (Race Relations Commissioner)</li> </ul>
16 Aug 2021	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugee and Migrant Services and Welcoming Communities: presentation and interest in TSI steering group.</li> <li>Facilitating meaningful engagement with diverse ethnic communities: presentation and discussion</li> </ul>
27 Sep 2021	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive Auckland Framework: discussion on inclusive recruitment process, attraction of staff, breakdown of current staff, cultural support, barriers to entry/retention</li> <li>Education NZ: feedback and discussion about support provided to international students in Auckland during COVID-19.</li> </ul>
08 Nov 2021	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity and Inclusion: drafting advice for increasing diversity at Auckland Council for Auckland Council ELT.</li> <li>Objectives, goals and outcomes for Social Cohesion community forum</li> <li>Reflection of 2021</li> </ul>
21 Feb 2022	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications Update: proposal for creation of EPAP Facebook page.</li> <li>Auckland Unlimited: feedback on Government Support packages (Reactivate Tamaki Makaurau and Activate Tamaki Makaurau), and information about international students</li> <li>Venues for Hire policy: discussion and feedback provided.</li> <li>Social Cohesion Forum Planning.</li> </ul>
28 Mar 2022	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcoming Communities Programme: provided feedback on scoping project.</li> <li>Future of Local Government Review</li> <li>Diversity and Inclusion paper: adoption of paper.</li> </ul>
9 May 2022	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government Elections 2022</li> <li>Auckland Parking Strategy</li> <li>National Policy Statement on Urban Development</li> </ul>
20 Jun 2022	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Safety</li> <li>Response to panels' diversity and inclusion paper (Auckland Council ELT)</li> <li>Culture and Community Update</li> </ul>
01 Aug 2022	Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Event Planning and Community Engagement – event planning session to inform new ethnic people's advisory panel</li> <li>Reflections on the panel term.</li> </ul>

## **Increasing diversity at Auckland Council**

The Panel's work programme for the 2019-22 term included a priority of ensuring:

*Auckland Council's workforce and contractors (especially at senior levels) represent the ethnic diversity of the city, so all people have equal economic opportunity and prosperity.*

The Panel has engaged with staff involved in progressing council's Inclusive Auckland Framework, including council's Deputy Chief Executive Patricia Reade and other members of the Executive Leadership Team.

The Panel agreed to provide further thoughts and recommendations in writing to Auckland Council's Executive Leadership team on how the Panel and council can meet its shared priority for a more diverse and inclusive workforce at Auckland Council. The panel produced a paper (the recommendations are provided as Attachment A) that was received by Acting Deputy Chief Executive Richard Jarrett and Director, Governance and Council Controlled Organisations Phil Wilson.

In summary, the Panel believes that the organisation should focus on four key areas to attract, retain and improve the staff experience/journey at Auckland Council:

1. An inclusive corporate culture that celebrates and prioritises cultural diversity.
2. A recruitment process that focuses on the needs of our diverse communities and upskills recruiting managers on inclusiveness and bias.
3. An employee experience that addresses barriers to wellbeing and advancement aimed at retaining its diverse workforce.
4. Training, mentorship and secondment opportunities for under-represented groups within the workforce to be represented at senior levels so council staff can better reflect the city they serve.

The Panel recognised that Auckland Council was off to a good start with a goal of improving diversity. The Panel also recognised that council has significant fiscal and capacity constraints due to pandemic. However, a number of meaningful interventions are able to be implemented with little disruption and cost that is likely to benefit council's performance and diversity.

The paper seeded many conversations within Auckland Council. We would like to thank the executive leadership and senior staff for engaging with the Panel, highlighting where many of these initiatives are already underway and undertaking to incorporate the majority as part of the updated Inclusive Auckland framework. This framework will be updated towards the end of 2022. A key area of discussion was how council can introduce measures, publish progress and be held accountable in this area. We are pleased that more work will be done in this area with the support of the Executive Leadership Team.

The panel was provided an update on the current status of diversity and inclusion at Auckland Council, as well as which of the paper's recommendations will be implemented, and the timelines involved.

## **Auckland Council's Inclusive Auckland Framework**

A focus area in the framework on people and culture aspires towards:

- A. **Diverse talent** – *Auckland Council creates a diverse workforce through its inclusive attraction, recruitment and talent management approaches and by reducing systemic barriers to inclusion*
- B. **Inclusive culture** – *Auckland Council has an inclusive workplace where all people can feel valued and respected, work flexibly and be part of an organisation that acts as a champion of diversity and inclusion*
- C. **Leadership development** – *Auckland Council has a diverse and inclusive leadership team and leadership talent pipeline.*

These are laudable goals that require a focused and all of organisation approach for success. It cannot be simply mandated (top down) or incentivised (through targets). Such an approach would risk an administrative-led focus on outputs and numbers rather than the more difficult but enduring benefits of:

- an inclusive corporate culture embedded in all parts of the organization
- innovative and agile processes that seek to address diverse cultural dynamics
- a constant celebration and promotion of diversity and inclusiveness by the mainstream rather than the diverse.

The Panel shares the desire of Auckland Council to have a diverse workforce and contractor base that reflects both the diversity of Auckland and the nature of Auckland as an internationally significant city. The Panel seeks to support Auckland Council increase its ethnic diversity at all levels of the organisation. Other demographic advisory panels will also have key role to play in advising and partnering with council in increasing its diversity as this is likely to be a core goal of all of Auckland's diverse communities that engage with council.

We believe the benefits of a focused plan to increase the diversity of council's workforce would result in:

- diverse staff feeling more connected and engaged to the organisation
- an organisation more attuned to the needs of all of its staff rather than the dominant/majority culture
- improvement in the cultural intelligence and competence of the organisation to serve a culturally diverse customer base
- improved engagement with minority communities who do not normally engage with council.

## **Community Engagement**

### **Session with Meng Foon Race Relations Commissioner**

We were honoured and privileged to invite Meng Foon, the Race Relations Commissioner to join us for a discussion. Meng Foon is New Zealand's Race Relations Commissioner and formerly Mayor of Gisborne for 24 years. Meng Foon attended one of our open meetings on 5 July 2021.

In the meeting, Meng Foon shared about his insight on local government, his experience of working with diverse communities and his advice to all of us in the meeting was to be courageous and take the challenge.

There are about 20+ people in attendance and the community members were very pleased that they get to ask questions and their questioned were answered.

### Observations and learnings

We need to provide more opportunities like this to include our community members, to encourage them to participate and to hear their voices, this is how we can work together for them to feel Auckland is like home.

### Appendix One – recommendations to Auckland Council Executive Leadership team in the Diversity and Inclusion Paper.

	Key Barriers/commentary	Ideas for Improvement
<p><b>An inclusive corporate culture that celebrates and prioritises cultural diversity</b></p>	<p>An organisation is driven by its culture and values. Increasing the diversity of a workforce doesn't happen except through deliberate action, an organisation wide commitment to it and constant reinforcement from influential leaders.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Set and publish targets for ethnic diversity across the workforce including senior leadership</li> <li>II. Establish a dashboard to measure progress and publish the results internally and externally so staff and the community can keep council accountable to its commitment</li> <li>III. Publish stories of the barriers and successes of ethnic staff to provide insight and inspiration to other ethnic staff and the wider workforce</li> <li>IV. Senior leaders to celebrate culturally significant events such as festivals and call out culturally inappropriate behaviour</li> </ol>
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p> <p>How can Auckland council recruit a diverse workforce</p>	<p>Council isn't seen as an attractive career option for many young people from ethnic communities. Its size, complexity and the community's general lack of knowledge about council's services means council has to work harder and more innovatively to attract a diverse talent pool.</p> <p>The New Zealand recruitment experience is daunting for many new migrants who have to face a panel of recruiters (often not of their own cultural background) using corporate language and little insight into the lived experience of the candidate</p> <p>Research shows that candidates</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Focus on improving the cultural diversity and cultural intelligence of council's People and Capability department so they are the centre of excellence and champions for recruiting a diverse workforce</li> <li>II. All council staff to have unconscious bias training as a mandatory pre-requisite to working in council</li> <li>III. Develop a volunteering/internship programme targeted specifically at the ethnic community as a way of candidates with predominantly overseas</li> </ol>

	<p>from ethnic communities without Anglicised names are much more likely to not progress through to interviews due to unconscious or conscious bias from recruiters. Successful candidates will also face a constant challenge in correcting colleagues on spelling and pronunciation.</p> <p>New Zealand recruiters do not place much value in overseas qualifications or work experience, especially in local government, due to the unique nature of the sector here</p> <p>Interviews are also a highly ineffective way of getting true insight into a candidate's competence or suitability for the job and the vast majority of decisions at interviews are based on "gut feel" and bias rather than actual competence. To quote Malcolm Gladwell: <i>"Intuition is a poor way of assessing a person's competence. We have a very limited ability to assess people by meeting them. An interview is an incredibly subjective and pre-conceived assessment of how one is meant to respond to questions."</i></p>	<p>qualifications/experience to prove themselves</p> <p>IV. Develop standards/expectations/training for all managers involved in recruitment</p> <p>V. Reconsider the role and influence of the direct line manager in recruitment panels due to the inherent bias and personal lens all managers tend to assess candidates through</p> <p>VI. Seriously and urgently consider implementing a name-blind recruitment process to address a significant and unfair disadvantage to candidates from ethnic communities</p>
<p><b>Retention</b></p> <p>How can Auckland council provide a safe and inclusive workplace to retain its diverse work force</p>	<p>Employees from migrant and ethnic communities tend to be loyal to their employers and dedicate their entire career to an employer, where they share core values, can see their culture reflected and celebrated at the workplace, and see a pathway for progression.</p> <p>Auckland council has a clear incentive to retain their best and brightest staff who they have invested in to meet the challenges of a recovering, growing and changing</p>	<p>I. Conduct a survey (or other means) to develop a baseline and understand and document council's ethnic make-up at organisation, department and team level</p> <p>II. Engage with council's ethnic workforce to discuss the barriers they face at work directly related to their cultural background (as opposed to those faced by the general workforce) and co-design actions/solutions to address them</p>



	<p>community. The challenge of recruiting and retention of diverse staff is faced across the public sector and there are opportunities for Auckland Council to work with the wider public sector including key ministries such as MBIE and Ethnic Affairs</p>	<p>III. Develop career pathway training and support for all staff so they are able to articulate and design their career aspirations at council</p>
<p><b>Growth and Development</b></p> <p>How can Auckland Council grow and develop its diverse workforce to ensure diversity in senior levels of the organisation</p>	<p>Team leaders and managers have a significant influence on the success and career progression of a staff member from the ethnic community. Not all people leaders have the cultural competence to manage people of different ethnic backgrounds Talent identification and development is vitally important for a successful organisation and too important to be left to the personal preferences of team leaders and managers</p>	<p>I. Develop and implement training opportunities for team leaders and managers in influencing and managing a culturally diverse workforce</p> <p>II. Develop a mentorship programme so younger or newer immigrant staff members have guidance and counsel available on succeeding at Auckland Council</p> <p>III. Identify opportunities for culturally diverse staff to undertake work experience or secondments in senior positions as a talent development pathway and to increase the diversity of senior leadership from within.</p>