



## Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel: End of Term Report September 2022

### Pūtake/Purpose

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1. Te Roopu Kaitohutohu Take Hāpori Iwi Takatāpui/ The Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel (the **Rainbow Panel**) proudly present this end of term report summarising our activities over the 2020-2022 term.
2. The Rainbow Panel provides a lived perspective on behalf of rainbow communities in Tāmaki-Makaurau/Auckland. Rainbow peoples are members of Auckland's refugee, migrant, senior, disability, and youth demographics, and we sit across all socio-economic and ethnic groups. This makes it important for our diverse voices to equitably participate in, and contribute to, life in Tāmaki-Makaurau/Auckland.
3. The **Rainbow Panel members** for the 2020-2022 term were:
  - John Kingi (Co-Chair)
  - Aych McArdle (Co-Chair)
  - Julie Watson
  - Jack Byrne
  - Max Tweedie
  - Fale Andrew Lesā
  - Tux Hika
  - Teresa Platt
  - Cam Clarkson
  - Lee Grabarek (resigned April 2021)
  - Tara Pond (resigned October 2020)
4. The Rainbow Panel was supported by the following Councillors and staff:
  - Councillor Richard Hills (Liaison Councillor)
  - Councillor Cathy Casey (Lead Liaison Councillor)
  - Carol Hayward (Principal Advisor – Panels, resigned July 2021)
  - Victoria Wicks Brown (Principal Advisor – Panels)
  - Duncan Glasgow (Governance Advisor)
  - David Gurney (Lead Officer)
  - Rhion Munro (Deputy Lead Officer)

## **Timatatanga/Introduction**

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5. The Rainbow Panel was first established in 2016, and provides lived, diverse, rainbow perspectives to Auckland Council (**the Council**).
6. Over the 2020-2022 term, the Rainbow Panel continued to build on a strong legacy of providing constructive strategic advice to the Governing Body and Council staff on matters of importance to rainbow communities.
7. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Council, it's operations, and the functioning of the Demographic Advisory Panels. This report explores the impacts of COVID on the panel and sets out our key achievements, reflections, and recommendations to those who come next.

## **Rautaki a roopu/Strategic Work Programme Priorities**

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8. In May 2021 the Rainbow Panel set the following key strategic work programme priorities:
  - Service Provision - Advocating for rainbow competency training for front facing customer service staff;
  - Community engagement – Seeking regular, ongoing, and meaningful Council engagement with rainbow communities; and
  - Policy - Housing and COVID-19 response are responsive to the needs of diverse rainbow communities.

### ***Service Provision – Rainbow competency training***

9. The Rainbow Panel advocated for Rainbow competency training for all frontline Council staff, as it is our view that the provision of safe community facing services, facilities, and events is a fundamental element of Council's service provision to the communities of Tāmaki-Makaurau. The provision of these services, facilities, and events requires staff who are culturally competent in meeting the needs of our broad and diverse rainbow whānau. All Rainbow Aucklanders should have access to equitable, safe, and respectful community services, no matter where they live.
10. We sought Rainbow competency training for all frontline Council staff, provided by an appropriate community organisation, at induction or through ongoing professional development. Alongside this, we believe that Council could work to co-design, with appropriately trained Rainbow staff or organisations, e-learning modules. Changes can be simple, from amendment of registration forms to ensure nonbinary / gender diversity options, to wider policy shifts needed, for example to ensure provision of single stall changing facilities and toilets are mandated within all new Council builds. Work can be done to ensure that when facilities lack such options, appropriate alternatives are found.
11. Following the current review of Council service provision, a key opportunity exists to look at different forms of service delivery, such as partnering with community groups and businesses to provide services that Council have delivered in the past. There is a principle being applied that communities deliver to communities. This may provide opportunities for Rainbow groups to receive funding to support them

to deliver directly to our communities. The Customer and Community Services division is looking at what support is needed to help community groups build up to deliver services Council would have delivered traditionally.

12. Our goals were:

- Short-term goal: To identify appropriate staff and teams within Council to work with the panel to identify capability, training, and process changes needed and to scope an action plan to implement these.
- Mid-term goal: To organise a symposium where relevant staff and teams present on how they ensure safe provision of services to Rainbow people. Staff and Rainbow organisations to join and provide some initial solutions that could be implemented across the organisation with ease, and others requiring further work.
- Long-term goal: That all frontline customer facing council staff receive rainbow cultural competency training. A work plan is established to refresh staff on current issues to keep their services relevant and responsive.

13. We were able to:

- Provide specialist advice to the Community and Engagement specialists teams on meaningful engagement and relationships;
- Engage with and provide support to the Principal Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion around development of a Diversity and Inclusion Framework for Council staff in public facing roles;
- Engage with the Director of Customer and Community Services, and the Customer and Community services leadership team on progressing training competency as a focus moving forward; and
- Heard from Active Recreation on an exciting pilot programme being rolled out to support competency training which may provide the basis for an approach across the Council.

14. We recommend that the next panel:

- Continue to engage with the Director Customer and Community Services and the Customer and Community Services Leadership team on progressing competency training;
- Identify ways to further support and amplify the work undertaken by the Principal Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion;
- Support Active Recreation to roll out and evaluate their pilot programme across the Customer and Community Services directorate; and
- Continue to work with policy makers including

## ***Community Engagement***

15. The Rainbow Panel advocated that Council engagement with rainbow communities needs to be regular, genuine, and targeted to the diverse communities in Tāmaki Makaurau all year round, not just during the Pride festival. We wanted to see local rainbow heritage featured in the stories we remember and celebrate in our city. We supported the development of a takatāpui hui and a Pasifika communities hui building on Pride festival events.
16. More than half of Aucklanders were born overseas and identify with a range of ethnic groups. The Rainbow Panel felt a sense of responsibility to improve the way we engage all members of rainbow communities particularly our Māori, Pacific peoples, Asian communities, rainbow refugees, and asylum seekers.
17. There is a clear need to provide a safe space for takatāpui and other minority communities within the wider rainbow communities to come together. A takatāpui hui supported by our panel and Council was a kaupapa we sought to support this term, as this was a priority recommendation from the former panel.
18. The Rainbow Panel recognised that the future of Tāmaki Makaurau is increasingly diverse and improving our visibility in these communities would help make our advice to Council more relevant and more agile. We knew that there are a significant percentage of rainbow communities who do not associate with pride month or other public forms of engagement. Their views are equally valid and the panel sought to be more effective through hearing from these voices.
19. Our goals were:
  - Short-term goal: To promote that the next panel intake target Māori, Pacific Peoples, and other ethnic communities to ensure that diverse rainbow peoples are encouraged to apply, and that the work programme prioritises the specific needs of rainbow people from these communities.
  - Mid-term goal: To organise a series of hui for Māori, Pacific, and Asian members of Tāmaki-Makaurau's rainbow communities.
  - Long-term goal: Increase funding for the panels to be able to deliver community consultation events on a regular basis.
20. We were able to:
  - Meet with Rainbow Path to hear about the challenges rainbow refugees and asylum seekers face and the role that government can play to ensure existing laws, policies and practices acknowledge and uphold their human rights;
  - Give specific targeted advice to the Customer and Community Services Directorate around venues and their use;
  - Link Auckland Unlimited with community members working to advance a multi-sport event for the Rainbow community (similar to Gay Games) (TP);
  - Engage with the Community Think project around ongoing use of venues; and

- Engage with Eke Panuku on Rainbow Art and History planning and design.

21. We recommend that the next panel:

- Prioritise targeted communities hui for Māori, Pacific peoples, and Asian communities as a priority;
- Continue to take an open and helpful approach to providing engagement advice, prioritising Council teams who seek to develop a reciprocal working relationship with the panel rather than simply coming to us with their specific engagement needs; and
- Continue the relationship with Eke Panuku to influence planning and design of Rainbow Art.

### ***Policy development and prioritisation***

22. The Rainbow Panel advocated that the specific needs for rainbow communities need to be incorporated into the Council's policy development and implementation. Our top priorities in the policy space included housing (particularly homelessness, rental security, and affordability) and the response to Covid-19.

23. A strong focus for Council is needed to reduce the barriers rainbow people experience due to their gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or sex characteristics in Tāmaki-Makaurau.

24. Rainbow communities are broad and diverse and need to be included in the Council's policy development. This should not be limited to rainbow specific policies, but should address the needs of rainbow communities in the Council's work around the needs of Māori, Pasifika, refugees and asylum seekers, ethnic minority communities, disabled people, unemployed or low-income workers, youth and seniors.

25. The panel recognises the impact and importance of government policy for our communities. Decisions made can impact how we live and prosper as communities, none more so over the last two years than housing and the impacts of COVID-19.

### *Housing policy*

26. The Rainbow Panel acknowledged the existing initiatives within Council, such as the Homelessness Taskforce and the affordable housing advocacy plan. We also acknowledged the initial support Council provided to RainbowYOUTH to fund a Homelessness Advisor.

27. While the Council is not a direct provider of housing, there is some potential for leverage through its relationship with and partial funding of the Auckland City Mission. Other opportunities include the Council's advocacy to central government Ministers, as proposed in the Council's Housing Advocacy Plan. At least one other major local body has identified Rainbow communities, particularly transgender people, as a priority within their homelessness work.

28. Housing policy work is undertaken across several Auckland Council policy teams that engage with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At this stage, our panel is not aware of all the existing policy levers hence the need for further scoping and mapping work.

#### *COVID-19 impacts*

29. Rainbow communities have faced specific challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there have been very few initiatives acknowledging and addressing these barriers. The panel sought opportunities to inform the Council's ongoing responses to COVID-19 and to ensure that the specific impacts on Rainbow communities were measured and addressed.

30. Our goals were:

- Short-term goals: Meet with the relevant Council housing policy team/s to scope a mapping exercise of existing levers and opportunities within the Council's policy (including its housing advocacy work) to address homelessness and rental security and affordability for Rainbow communities.
- Regular briefings on steps the Council is taking to rebuild from the pandemic, with the opportunity to provide timely input about priorities within Rainbow communities particularly for those most impacted by the pandemic, including due to insecure employment or housing, their immigration status or isolation.
- Mid-term goal: To organise a rainbow community housing forum, involving Council policy staff, RIMU, City Mission, HUD and other key stakeholders, to identify priority actions to address homelessness and insecure or unaffordable housing.
- Long-term goal: Implementation of the action plan including measuring and addressing the level of homelessness, and housing insecurity and unaffordability amongst Rainbow communities in Auckland.

31. We were able to:

- Give direct advice around the affordable housing advocacy plan;
- Engage with Council's Community and Social Policy team to influence policy decisions;
- Hear from leading community researchers including Dr Brodie Fraser;
- Provide ongoing advice to the Mayor and Councillors, through the executive leadership team forum on COVID-19 impacts and priorities; and
- Contribute to cross panel discussions about the importance of joint work to support housing initiatives and engagement advice (see Appendix 1).

32. We recommend that the next panel:

- Prioritise policy engagements across Council to have greater direct influence on matters that impact rainbow communities; and

- Play a role in linking community researchers, groups, and projects to relevant Council teams.

### ***Additional work***

33. The Rainbow Panel has contributed to additional work outside our strategic priorities including:

- Provided advice to the Council's Finance Committee on the Long Term Plan, including giving advice on how to enable Panels to more meaningfully engage in the LTP process;
- Presented to the Parks, Arts, Community, and Events Committee on the panel's strategic work programme and priorities for the term;
- Engaged through the Demographic Advisory Panels strategic working groups on Climate Change, Thriving Communities, and Elections;
- Engaged through the Co-Chairs Forum, Executive Leadership Team Forum, and Mayoral Forums;
- Provided specific advice on Council venues and community engagement;
- Provided advice on the Three Waters reform.

### **Reflections**

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34. As our term comes to an end we want to share a number of reflections including:

- The delay in appointing the Rainbow Panel due to COVID-19 reduced our term from the customary 3 years to only 2 years;
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first 12 months saw only 6 panel meetings, followed by 8 meetings between 2021-2022. This essentially reduced the number of meetings by a half, impacting our ability to progress our priorities;
- COVID-19 has defined this term of the panel, and that lens should be applied to how our work and outcomes are viewed;
- We struggled to achieve our goals around community engagement, and believe this should be a priority for the next panel;
- The transition to online hui hampered the ability to meet, and reduced the ability to hold community forums in a COVID environment where engagement with communities was difficult; and ;
- We enjoyed our engagement with the newly former Rainbow Advisory Group within Wellington City Council; and
- COVID-19 impacted our panel from the outset, and in some regards impacted our efficacy throughout the remained of the term.

## **General recommendations**

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35. We recommend that:

- Future panel members build relationships with other panels and work on the intersections between panels across key issues such as housing and homelessness concerns;
- The new panel convenes a meeting early in their term with the former panel members;
- The new panel continues to engage with the Wellington City Council's Rainbow Advisory Group;
- Council provides opportunities for panels to connect more regularly with elected members and the senior leadership team to ensure panels are front of mind when issues arise that impact our communities. Panels want to be seen as providing a value add to all aspects of the Council's work;
- Council, with advice from panels, consider how to ensure increased data collection and collation as data contributes to an evidence based approach;
- Council clarifies the role of the liaison councillor as a feedback and connector to the governing body;
- Council better supports new panel members at the beginning of the term, and any new members appointed subsequently to fill vacancies, with a formalised and structured induction;
- The panel agitates early and often to meet with decision makers, do not wait for them to come to the Panel.
- Council ensures appropriate resourcing for panels; and
- Ensures that the recruitment process for new panel members is balanced between community and council representatives.

## **Closing remarks and mihi**

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36. It has been a privilege for us to serve our communities through the Rainbow Panel. We have taken the responsibility, to be a voice and sharer of our lived experiences, seriously and with determination.
37. We want to thank all those who have contributed to our work from our support staff including Carol Hayward, Victoria Wicks Brown, Duncan Glasgow, David Gurney, Rhion Munro, and Olivia Boniface. As well we acknowledge the elected members we have engaged with most regularly, Cathy Casey, Richard Hills, Alf Filipaina, and Phil Goff. E mihi kau ana.
38. We are pleased to present this report outlining our work over the last term and we wish future panels all the best in continuing this mahi in years to come

## APPENDIX ONE

### **Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel (RCAP) Housing and Homelessness work report**

One of the RCAP priorities has been the effects of lack of affordable housing and experiences of homelessness for members of Tāmaki Makaurau's Rainbow communities. Extending the work of the 2016-2019 RCAP, housing and the effect of Covid-19 were identified as an ongoing priority in this term.

The RACP felt that there needed to be a stronger connection between the different council departments undertaking mahi on housing. For instance, this work includes social policy on homelessness through the Community and Social Policy team, research undertaken by RIMU, affordable housing analyses in other areas, funding to homelessness services providers from operational areas, and internal staff development.

The RCAP asked that staff working in the areas of homelessness, affordable and accessible housing provide information about Council's contribution in these sectors. The following updates of strategies, activities and funding were provided:

- Bonnie Apps – Community and Social Policy team, update on work on the council homelessness and housing work programmes, October 2021 and July 2022
- Update on Auckland Council Affordable Housing Work Programme from Katerina Maki – Community and Social Policy team, November 2021 paper for RCAP meeting.
- Auckland Council Strategic Advice Unit paper *Government Housing Reform Programme 2020-2023*

In conjunction with increasing the connections between council departments, the RCAP became aware that all demographic advisory panels had housing as a work plan priority, albeit with different perspectives. The RCAP played a key role in planning and co-hosting a Demographic Advisory Panels cross-panel meeting: Housing and Homelessness on 27 July 2022), with thirty-five panel members attending. The intention of this hui was to bring together the panels to discuss how best to provide advice to council's elected members and senior leaders on the impacts of homelessness and affordable housing on our communities. It was agreed that a combined report, collating each panel's concerns, would be attached to the end of term report for PACE.

The July 2022 cross-panel hui on housing was intended to be the first of a series of hui discussing the framework of policies and services for people experiencing homelessness and lack of affordable housing. That framework of policies and services includes:

- The Ministry of Housing and Development's:
  - Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020 – 2023,
  - MAIHI Ka Ora – the National Māori Housing Strategy,
  - Affordable Housing Fund; and
  - Progressive Home Ownership Fund
- Auckland Council's:

## APPENDIX ONE

- Kia Whai Kāinga Tātou Katoa - Regional, cross-sectoral homelessness plan for Auckland
- Homelessness services funding and limited outreach
- Partnership – Haumarū Housing
  
- Service providers including:
  - Auckland City Mission
  - Housing First
  - Haumarū Housing

Unfortunately, due to illness, the HUD, Housing First, and Haumarū representatives were unable to attend the 27 July cross-panel hui. Presentations were made by Gary Blick, Economist and Bonnie Apps and Taff Wikaira from council.

### **Recommendations from the hui were:**

- The PACE committee is provided with a combined housing recommendations report from all panels as part of the 2022 end of term reports;
- Further cross panel hui on homelessness and housing affordability are planned as part of the work programmes for panels in the next term;
- Information for further hui should include the role of government and service providers in the system specifically for Tāmaki Makaurau;
- Elected members and senior leaders respond to panels at the cross-panel hui to ensure there is a feedback loop about issues raised.