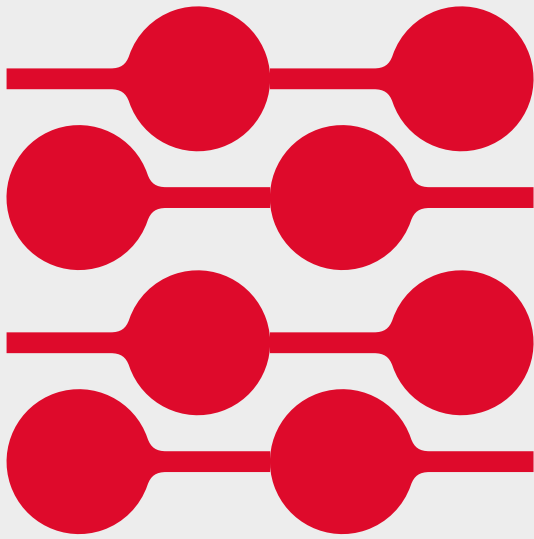




Disability Advisory Panel

Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel

Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel

Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel

Seniors Advisory Panel

Youth Advisory Panel

City Centre Advisory Panel

Rural Advisory Panel

Small Business Advisory Panel



ADVISORY PANELS END OF TERM REPORTS 2022 - 2025

11 September, 2025





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Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Hunga Hauā

Disability Advisory Panel

Celebrating stronger foundations to build on.

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Introduction

At a time when the disability community is under pressure from all sides, whether it be the cost of living or cuts to disability support, local government is a space where we can and have been able to make progress on some things. There's lots of work left to do. However, this report is an opportunity to take stock of what we've achieved and to reflect on this Panel term.

The report covers:

- [Members of the panel](#)
- [Highlights from this term](#)
- [The role of the panel](#)
- [Work programme priorities and achievements](#)
- [Community engagement](#)
- [Reflections on ways of working](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

Members of the panel

The panel is made up of the following members of the disability community.

Co-Chairs:

- Barry de Geest
- Martine Abel-Williamson

Panel Members:

- Amy Hogan
- Áine Kelly-Costello
- Lavinia Lovo (joined September 2024)
- Gerard Martin
- Lorraine McQuigg (joined September 2024)
- Ryan Meechan
- Chris Orr

Note: three panel members resigned during the term; Sam Smith in February 2024, Toa Te Wheoro in July 2024, and Bonnie Robinson in August 2024.

Supporting Staff:

The panel is grateful for the support of our Auckland Council staff, including:

- Co-Lead Officers – Elise Copeland and Jonathan Bengé
- Governance Advisor – Milly Athy-Timmins
- Principal Advisor Panels - Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

We appreciate the Councillors who attend our hui when available and help relay information to and from other elected councillors, including:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Sharon Stewart
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey

Highlights from the 2023-25 term

Disability-inclusive emergency management

The Disability Advisory Panel (DAP) helped to make sure Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) understands the importance of having a disability-specific work programme so disabled people aren't left behind in emergencies. We did this by holding a disability community hui about this, with a dedicated follow-up plan. This included writing a report out of the hui¹ and continuing to collaborate with AEM. In June 2025, we presented AEM's new disability sector inclusion work programme together to the Civil Defence and Emergency Management committee of Council.² We are proud to say it was strongly informed by disability sector engagement including the recommendations from the hui report.

Disability Action Plan overhaul

This term, Auckland Council policy staff, with guidance from the Panel, have given the Disability Action Plan and reporting process a welcome makeover. The DAP will get reports on how the council departments are going with the actions in the plan every six months. A new section has been added to highlight "business as usual" activities where accessibility and disability responsiveness have been embedded in Auckland Council work. It is now publicly available on the [Disability Advisory Panel's Council webpage](#) giving greater transparency to council's actions. The media release about this [can be found here](#).

Accessibility on the radar at Eke Panuku

Last year, media reported that the pilot pool Tidal Steps being installed in Karanga Plaza wasn't going to be physically accessible for many disabled people due to challenges with its location.³ Since then, the panel persistently reinforced this feedback to Eke Panuku and looked for constructive ways forward. Eke Panuku did bring in an experienced disabled accessibility consultant to assess where

¹ Kelly-Costello, Á. March, 2025. "Are we included in your plan?" Report on Auckland Disability community Hui on Planning for emergencies. Auckland Council Disability Advisory Panel. Published by OUR Auckland <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/media/lm5mtzv3/plan-report-auckland-disability-community-emergencies.pdf>

² Auckland Council removing barriers for disabled people before and during emergencies <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2025/06/auckland-council-removing-barriers-for-disabled-people/>

³ Auckland's new outdoor summer pool won't be accessible for everyone <https://thelist.co.nz/newsfeed/aucklands-new-outdoor-summer-pool-wont-be-accessible-for-everyone/>

improvements could be made. Unfortunately, significant changes to the pilot weren't able to be made for the 2024 / 2025 summer. However, advice from the review is now informing the design of the longer-term Te Ara Tukutuku redevelopment in Wynyard Quarter where two pools are proposed. This wasn't an immediate win as such, but as a result of raising this issue, Eke Panuku are much more aware of barriers facing the disability community and the need to engage with us early on in designing public places and spaces.

Accessibility improved in City Rail Link station design

The panel pushed firmly to ensure that the design of accessibility indicators like tactiles and lighting at City Rail Link stations was consistent with existing above-ground train stations. This had not been set to be the case and required notable change of plans.

Great progress on parks accessibility assessments

We were impressed with the council team internally undertaking thorough accessibility assessments of prioritised parks across Auckland. The DAP advised on how parks accessibility information is shared and mapped. They were beginning, successfully, to seek local board endorsements of their assessment reports.⁴ The DAP have written a letter in support of their business case to prioritise making parks and beaches accessibility information much easier to find online through a new accessibility tab, both text-based information and a map and a search function. This has been warmly received by the General Manager - Parks & Community Facilities. The panel looks forward to staying in touch on this initiative.

Good relationships with other Advisory Panels

This term, the co-chairs of all six demographic advisory panels have worked closely together. These are Disability, Rainbow Communities, Ethnic Communities, Pacific Peoples, Youth, and Seniors. This has strengthened our joined up and intersectional advocacy to Councillors and the Mayor.

⁴ For instance, Rodney Local Board

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2025/07/parks-for-everyone/>

The role of the Disability Advisory Panel

As described in the Disability Advisory Panel's Strategic Priorities:

The Disability Advisory Panel inspires and supports Auckland Council to value and utilise the expertise and leadership of disabled people [so that the council] embeds disability impact thinking and universal design as business as usual across places, access, climate action, the council workforce, governance and digital inclusion.

Our kaupapa is to centre the diverse experiences, strengths, and rights of disabled people in all the panel's work. Guided by principles such as inclusion, equity, respect for diverse identities and language, and a commitment to human rights, the panel aims to ensure no one is left behind and to celebrate progress while addressing systemic inequities.

The Panel's role is also described on the Disability Advisory Panel webpage, including:

- identify the issues that are important to people with disabilities
- provide advice on our regional strategies, policies and plans
- help us to effectively engage with people with disabilities.



Work programme priorities and achievements

Our priorities for the 2022-25 panel term focused on areas of persistent inequities for the disability community, where local government has an important role to play.

Engagement on our priorities came mainly through kōrero with presenters from inside and outside of the council at panel meetings. It also involved cross-panel forums along with engagements we ran as a panel, detailed in the community engagement section.

Robust Disability Action Plan Monitoring

The Disability Action Plan (the Plan) is the key document that sets out Auckland Council's strategic approach to creating a thriving and accessible Tāmaki Makaurau. The panel has worked with Auckland Council staff over the term to give high-level guidance on refreshing the plan and in re-establishing regular reporting on the plan every six months.

The refreshed Plan and most recent report provide detailed and compelling evidence of the range of work underway to make Auckland a more accessible and welcoming place for the disability community. Based on advice from the DAP, a new section on "business as usual" has been added to the Plan, to highlight the good accessibility and disability-responsive practices which have become embedded in Auckland Council's work, and therefore are no longer listed as actions in the plan. We also observed that actions varied enormously in their scope and complexity, from the relatively quick fixes to the multi-year work programmes, so guidance will be developed to assist staff to frame up their actions in a way that creates a bit more consistency and ability to report on the long-term ones.

For greater transparency and accountability, the Plan is now also available to the public on the [Disability Advisory Panel's webpage](#), and the reports will also be made available there.

The current reporting structure is quite comprehensive which, given the size of council, makes for an informative if lengthy read. We look forward to continuing to work with the policy team to sustain this fuller picture of disability-related action within the council but no doubt the processes will continue to be refined over time.

Climate and Extreme Weather Resilience and Preparedness, Response and Recovery

The impacts of the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle were significant for many in the disability community, highlighting the need to build partnerships with key agencies such as Auckland Emergency Management (AEM). We have worked closely with AEM throughout the term, notably through a community hui as detailed in the community Engagement section below. We also interacted with the storm Recovery Office.

On the climate adaptation front, climate lead Áine Kelly-Costello has provided strategic advice with an initiative of Auckland Council's climate adaptation team to work with the disability community to run workshops on climate adaptation and administer a grant scheme \$150,000 in grants for disability-led climate adaptation-related activities. We hope this will be a great opportunity for the disability community to kōrero about how we can build our own knowledge about climate action. It's a chance to contribute our expertise to making our city more resilient to extreme weather, lowering carbon emissions while also becoming more accessible for our community.



Accessible and Inclusive Recruitment

The Panel met with previous and current heads of Diversity , Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to explore what's needed for Auckland Council to be an attractive employer to disabled people where people feel safe to disclose disability and have a flexible working environment. Auckland Council is introducing optional questions to understand what proportion of its workforce is disabled to better enable it to support disabled kaimahi.

The council also has its own disability network who panel members met with earlier in the term and who the DEI team are in touch with.

The DEI team are working with the NZ Disability Employers Network on an Accessibility Tick assessment, which will deliver a comprehensive set of recommendations on next steps Auckland Council can take in this area. It is anticipated that these actions will be reported on in the Disability Action Plan.

We also had a related priority around advocating for Auckland Council entities to appoint more disabled people. We sought to profile the importance of disabled voices in all positions when we could. We also hope that working to make our local elections processes more accessible to our community will over time reduce barriers leading to more disabled people standing for and being elected to Auckland Council itself.

Housing Accessibility and Affordability

While the Panel was unable to engage as much as desired in this area, Co-Lead Officer Elise Copeland spearheaded research on the experiences of disabled people in medium density housing in the city. The panel had input into the research primarily via housing lead Amy Hogan.

Via Elise Copeland's work on Plan Change 79, the panel discussed pedestrian safety and accessible parking requirements for new housing developments. We would often comment in other contexts on the need for accessible public and private housing which meets robust universal design standards given how foundational it is.

It has been disappointing to see central Government gutting emergency housing protections, among other regressive measures, and this was one of a number of issues highlighted in a letter from the six advisory panels to the Mayor, in requesting he advocate to Government on our shared concerns.

Disability Awareness Within Council

We have reason to believe that disability awareness, and indeed action on that awareness, is increasing in many areas, given the steady progress from the Disability Action Plan, along with ongoing discussions with Eke Panuku which is new this term. We are less certain about Tataki Auckland as they have not engaged much around the Plan nor with the panel, so this may be an area for future panels to explore. DAP support staff are enthusiastic backers of disability community input and help to raise the profile of disability by being able to mention or sometimes enact DAP advice through their own work. Max Hardy of Council's Executive Leadership team has met with the DAP and helps increase visibility of the panel at the highest level. As they should, various parts of Auckland Council also engage and/or partner with other disability organisations and disabled people.

A challenge is that Council's usual way of working has been by department which can create siloes, and processes for sharing good practices are thus more limited but we hear there is work to embed different ways of working and an appetite for more joined up working.

Accessibility of Council-Funded, Owned, or Operated Facilities

After it was reported by disability media outlet the D*List that the pilot pool Tidal Steps being installed in Karanga Plaza wasn't going to be physically accessible for many disabled people,⁵ the DAP persistently reinforced this feedback and sought a path forward with Eke Panuku. It became clear that Eke Panuku did not have accessibility considerations consistently built into their project planning, and only projects costed over a certain amount would may get scrutinised by Auckland Council's universal design staff, so this one had gone under the radar. The key problem was the choice of location which, for geographical and tidal reasons, posed notable accessibility challenges.

While Eke Panuku were not able to make significant changes to the pilot, an experienced disabled accessibility consultant was brought in to assess in which areas improvements could be made. Her review concluded that achieving universal access in that location was impractical but that advice from the review is now

⁵Auckland's new outdoor summer pool won't be accessible for everyone
<https://thedlist.co.nz/newsfeed/aucklands-new-outdoor-summer-pool-wont-be-accessible-for-everyone/>

informing the design of the longer-term Te Ara Tukutuku redevelopment in Wynyard Quarter where two pools are proposed. The review also recommended focusing on making existing swimming facilities more accessible and usable. We have met four times with Eke Panuku now where there was no relationship with the DAP prior to our knowledge. We have been clear about how crucial it is to have requisite accessibility expertise involved as early as possible within infrastructure development projects which Eke Panuku specialise in.

We also spoke to the council team internally undertaking thorough accessibility assessments of prioritised parks across Auckland, advising on how parks accessibility information is shared and mapped. They have assessed 21 parks and five regional parks so far. They were beginning, successfully, to seek local board endorsements of their assessment reports.⁶ We were very impressed with their work. The DAP have written a letter in support of their business case to prioritise making parks and beaches accessibility information much easier to find online through a new accessibility tab, both text-based information and a map and a search function.

The New Zealand Disability Employers Network is currently completing and Accessibility Tick assessment for Council which dAP members have inputted into. This also covers Council facilities.

Our local boards have a range of responsibilities including the management of facilities like pools, playgrounds and libraries, as well as local community events, environmental restoration and so forth. We have observed a very uneven implementation of accessibility good practices across the local boards and want to encourage their consistent prioritisation going forward. As such, we want to engage more, within our capacity constraints, with local boards. This sits outside the advisory panels current Terms of Reference but is an area under exploration by staff and could be incorporated in recommendations to the incoming Mayor.

Transport Accessibility for the Whole Journey

The DAP inputted into transport planning in a range of projects, complementing the operational role of Auckland Transport's two accessibility advisory groups. We engaged with the City Rail Link planning to ensure that crucial elements of accessibility best met the needs of disabled people. This included the placement

⁶ For instance, Rodney Local Board

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2025/07/parks-for-everyone/>

and contrast of tactile indicators and lighting levels on platforms in particular for blind and low vision passengers where greater consistency with existing above-ground stations had been deprioritised. We acknowledge the assistance of the Mayor in resolving this.

In a consultation on the Western Corridor, we emphasised the need for all elements including staff offices to be accessible so that disabled staff would be able to work there. We inputted into a range of parking plans, emphasising the need for taxi drop-off areas, including near Britomart as an emergency evacuation safety measure.

Finally, we engaged with a number of stakeholders on e-scooter use, including the two licensed providers of e-scooters for Auckland. While the power to decide whether e-scooters remains on footpaths remains with Central Government, we were able to explain the hazard risks that poor parking or inconsiderate riding can pose and hear what Flamingo and Lime are doing to minimise these.

We also noted that Central Government's decision to reverse safe speed limits is likely to have negative safety implications for our community and that it would be helpful for the DAP to be able to input on Auckland council's position on how the city localises consequential proposals like this one.



Digital Accessibility

A body of work is underway to improve the accessibility of Auckland Council's public-facing website, in line with WCAG Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, along with the accessibility of documents. This is being led by the Customer Experience and Digital Services team. The panel has had some involvement in advising on the approach for this. Importantly, this team have also been working with web accessibility specialists and carrying out user testing for this work.

Regarding accessible formats more broadly, the Panel are very aware that Auckland Council does not have a consistent approach to budgeting for and providing these even for public-facing communications. We have encouraged a further proactive effort in this area.

Governance Participation and Representation

DAP member Gerard Martin chaired the Cross-Panel Elections Working Group which met regularly with Auckland Council's Elections Programme Team and provided strategic advice in support of marketing and promotional effort to successfully deliver the 2025 local elections in the Auckland region. The Panels proved well-suited to this work due to their efforts to improve the inclusivity of many of Council's initiatives. Two members from each of the six demographic advisory panels met over a dozen times to hear and provide feedback to the Election Programme Team's efforts to engage all Aucklanders to support the 2025 election programme.

In particular, the Working Group supported the goals of the Programme;

- to increase the cultural diversity among local election candidates
- increasing the numbers voting, particularly from communities that tend to have low voting rates
- ensuring a positive experience. for voters and candidates alike.

The Elections Working Group supported efforts to leverage community events to promote the election programme by hosting their own election events including successful promotions from the Pacific and Rainbow panels. The Elections Programme Team and working group worked together to address the need for better efficacy for a phone-based system to assist those from the blind low vision community to participate more effectively in voting. In turn, the Elections Working Group provided useful guidance for the team's promotion of information and

creative design for the Vote Auckland website and for the provision of interpreted content for diverse communities.

The Elections Working Group also lent its support to the council's determination to host online events for candidates, while also making it easier to nominate candidates online. The efforts of the Auckland Council team to reach out to communities, including seniors as well as school leavers was acknowledged by the Working Group as a means of developing a more sustainable and engaged voting community over the longer-term.

There were also a couple of appreciated opportunities for the DAP to engage with Central Government. In 2023, DAP members met with the then disability minister and the CEO of Whaikaha. Panel co-chairs also met twice with the Ministerial Enquiry Panel about central government enquiring into COVID19 pandemic matters such as lock downs, vaccine mandates, and communication channels, etc.

Community engagement

It's important to the DAP to help bring wider disability community perspectives beyond our own to Council. We're aware we are not always as visible or spending as much time building relationships in the disability community as we might like with our primary mandate being Auckland Council-facing. However, we're hoping that in future, there will be easier ways for our community to keep up with news of likely interest to our community from Auckland Council – having a newsletter is something on our wishlist for next term. In the meantime, this term we focused our community engagement on emergency management and this is described next.

Hui on emergency planning

Recognising the critical need to focus on disability-inclusive emergency preparedness and response in Aotearoa and in the Auckland region, Auckland Council's Disability Advisory Panel took the opportunity to focus our community engagement for the 2023-2025 term on this topic. The DAP ran a hui on 13 Nov 2024 attended by about 80 people including members of disability organisations and service providers, disabled people, whānau, emergency management personnel and Council staff. The hui aimed to

- foster relationships and shared knowledge between disability community and sector, and agencies and elected representatives with key roles within emergency response
- constructively share learnings from Auckland's 2023 extreme weather events
- use learnings to inform local and regional emergency preparedness and response plans.

Disabled leadership, supported by Auckland Council staff, were core to the design and running of the hui. Accessibility for the event included: step-free access, room size, microphone system, NZSL interpreting, koha for disabled presenters who were not staff etc..



The hui included a range of panels and presentations from disabled people with experience of, or policy experience in responding to, extreme weather, as well as key emergency management representatives.

Discussion sessions covered the following questions:

- What practical resources, trainings, or support would you, your whānau or your organisation like to have, regarding:
 - a) emergency preparedness – so that you are better prepared for an emergency.
 - b) at the actual time of an emergency and during the response afterwards so no one is left behind.
- At the time of an emergency, what do I have, what do I need, what can I offer? Participants could respond for themselves or for their organisation.

Outputs from the hui included a media release,⁷ a synthesis report, a 2.5-hour recording for internal and on-request use, presentations to Auckland Council committees about the event, documenting accessibility learnings internally for the council, and using this event as an example of advisory panel community engagement for panel inductions.

The synthesis report covers take-aways from the discussions as well as recommendations.⁸

The value of the hui and importance of collaboration came through strongly from a range of participants across disability community and sector, council staff, and emergency response agencies. Emergency response agencies recognised the importance of meaningful disability community and sector involvement.

Zoom hui on long term plan

In addition to cross-panel participatory forums on the long-term plan, we held a zoom session for the disability community to be brought up to speed on the long-term plan and how to submit. About a dozen people attended so it was a small group but feedback was that it was helpful.

⁷ Kelly-Costello, Á. March, 2025. “Are we included in your plan?” Report on Auckland Disability community Hui on Planning for emergencies. Auckland Council Disability Advisory Panel. Published by OUR Auckland <https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/media/lm5mtzv3/plan-report-auckland-disability-community-emergencies.pdf>

⁸ [“Are we included in your plan?” Report on Auckland Disability community Hui on Planning for emergencies.](#)

Reflections on ways of working

Below we reflect on how the panel operated in the Council environment this term.

Accessibility

Overall, we found our participation in panel processes, with the active support of our DAP staff, accessible most of the time. Our staff try hard to make sure Panel members can fully participate including by

- hosting in-person meetings in a venue with step-free and wheelchair access (council buildings)
- having online meeting attendance options, where in-person attendees use microphones so they can be heard
- sending out word versions of agenda materials in advance to screen reader users
- meetings are NZSL interpreted whenever needed, and agendas and documents are supplied to interpreters in advance to assist with meeting preparation
- having staff on hand at meetings ready to assist with getting food, guiding etc.
- reimbursing transport to meetings as needed including via a taxi chit (to reduce paperwork).

However, there were some challenges. There is still no consistency of knowledge across Auckland Council about what constitutes a screen reader-friendly document. This is in part about the document format, but also involves factors like its layout, whether alt text is used to describe images and maps, and the amount and complexity of tables to navigate. This sometimes made meeting preparation more challenging. Also, the council building lifts to talk, but while the system for finding a lift and operating the digital display may technically be accessible without sight, it is not considered easy to navigate or use by our blind panel members.

While cross-panel forums were overall fruitful, the noise levels, sometimes-lack of facilitation at tables and speed of discussions could make interactions challenging.

Recruitment and onboarding

We were glad that the recruitment for our panel round involved previous DAP members and we would like this to continue. It's important to have disabled people familiar with the context as part of the recruitment processes as they will understand the mix of lived experience, expertise and what is required of the DAP best. This did not happen for those coming on midterm, although the control of sorts was that it was a much narrower recruitment where DAP members shouldered people who we considered had some of the skills and lived experience we lacked on the DAP at that time.

While those joining at the start of term got considerable and helpful induction, our two panel members who joined later in the term had individual induction sessions with Council staff. However, there was limited opportunity to engage with other Panel members, which may also have been helpful in familiarising themselves with processes and having confidence to speak up. Also, one thing that was not covered in induction was examples of previous community engagements but we are happy for ours to be used hopefully among other examples going forward, so incoming advisory panel members see what variety of ideas can be possible.



Engagement with presenters and on long-term documents

Our predominant way of working this term involved presenters sending the DAP a presentation or report to read in advance of the meeting, presenting at the meeting, and then opening the floor for discussion. This often led to constructive kōrero, especially on many operational matters which would technically sit outside our Terms of Reference but in reality was often where our advice could be most readily actioned. At best, these processes led to a feedback loop indicating how our feedback had been considered and/or implemented. Auckland Emergency Management, Parks & Community Facilities, Eke Panuku and the Disability Action Plan staff were particularly receptive to the feedback loops and we hope these will continue to become more frequent. Regarding the in-meeting presentations themselves, while short presentations were useful reminders about report content, longer ones ate into the precious and limited time we could have for discussion, and we observed that requests for brevity from the co-chairs were not always honoured.

We also appreciated that engagement on the long-term plan started much earlier and was more thorough this time than in previous terms. A comprehensive report came out of this cross-panel engagement which Auckland Council staff have used to communicate DAP views on long-term issues. Panels largely wanted to see more spent on public transport and community services. In particular, the DAP emphasised the need for investment impact assessments to cover accessibility. In the end, the Governing Body decided to impose lower rates which reduced the long-term budget for these initiatives. While most of the guidance from the panels was not incorporated into the plan, the cross-panel report from the engagement has served as a helpful internal document to guide staff.

Delegation

The co-chairs had overall responsibility for meeting facilitation and representing us at presentations to the Governing Body (councillors).

In some areas, there was a deliberate approach to delegation, to spread the workload outside of meetings throughout the panel beyond the co-chairs, and to align work with members' areas of interest and expertise.

Some examples of where this worked well included:

- Áine's leadership on the emergency management priority community engagement, and representative on various Council climate-related initiatives;
- Chris along with Barry was instrumental in persuading architects of the City Rail Link not to compromise on particular accessibility measures, and asking relevant questions at cross-panel transport engagements;
- Amy worked closely with our co-lead officer Elise to contribute to research on the experiences of disabled Aucklanders regarding medium-density housing;
- and Gerard chairing the Elections cross-panel working group.

One challenge we encountered involved the rules around DAP members not being allowed to be contracted, even for similar advisory-type purposes, to other Auckland Council departments while on the DAP. There are good reasons for these rules – we are not seeking a change to them – but they do present a challenge due to the degree of specific subject-matter expertise held by a small number of people in the community. One way we have worked within this is that DAP members can be paid from the Panel's budget to sit as a DAP representative on various relevant projects.

Conclusion

In any large system, progress is often slower than we want it to be, especially at a time when our disability community is under so many stresses from poverty to inadequate disability support options to housing insecurity just to name a few. However, as a Panel, we are appreciative that we really have seen progress and good will from much of Council towards making Auckland and council itself more accessible and inclusive for disabled people this term. We hope the incoming Mayor will recognise the value of the advisory Panels, and that we can look forward to building on the mahi of this term with a refreshed DAP in 2026.



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Āhua Iwi Kē

Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Key Messages

The Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel (ECAP) focused on fostering belonging, wellbeing, and equity for Auckland's diverse ethnic communities.

Key strategic priority areas included belonging and inclusion, wellbeing and safety, economic growth and development, transport access, and climate action and sustainability.

The panel contributed to council policy through culturally informed and lived experiences advice, amplifying the voices of ethnic communities across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Purpose

This paper details the work and strategic focus of the ECAP during the 2022–2025 term. It highlights the panel's contributions to council initiatives and its advocacy on behalf of Auckland's ethnically diverse communities.

Members of the panel

Co-Chairs:

- Ireen Rahiman-Manuel
- Krish Naidu

Panel Members:

- Aadil Basha
- Abdul Mohamud
- Dr Acacia Cochise
- Eva Chen
- Parminder Singh
- Rozeendra Ronish Kumar
- Jasmine Yang
- Luke Qin

Note: one panel member resigned during the term; Ogonna Nweke in June 2024.

Supporting Staff:

- Co-Lead Officers – Manoj Ragupathy and Michalea Seto
- Governance Advisor - Milly Athy-Timmins
- Principal Advisor Panels - Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Kerrin Leoni
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey

Background and Context

Panel Overview:

ECAP was established to provide advice to Auckland Council on issues affecting ethnically diverse communities. Panel members brought lived experience and community insights to support inclusive policy development. The panel also supports the Mayor of Auckland, the Governing Body and council staff to effectively engage and better understand the views of increasingly diverse communities of Auckland. The panel was supported by council staff and worked alongside other demographic advisory panels to align on cross-cutting issues.

Panel Composition:

ECAP members represented a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting Auckland's cultural diversity. Their collective knowledge informed recommendations on how council services and systems could better serve ethnic communities.



Discussion

Work Programme Priorities and Achievements

1. Belonging and Inclusion

Aim: Ethnic and migrant communities are able to fully participate in Auckland's social, environmental, economic, and political activities without barriers.

Key Focus Areas:

- a. Ensure Auckland Council attracts ethnic people to stand for elections, supports ethnic voter participation and appoints ethnic candidates to board positions.
- b. Monitor the Inclusive Auckland Framework to ensure diverse staff representation in Auckland Council's leadership.
- c. Ensure the ECAP plays a part in influencing Auckland's key cultural events and activities.
- d. Develop strategic partnerships.

Actions:

- i. We had one public meeting with the Ministry of Ethnic Communities and former Minister for Ethnic Communities Hon. Melissa Lee to understand areas of common interests and opportunities for collaboration. This allowed for public participation and community NGOs to share the challenges that they faced.
- ii. As part of one of our recent public meetings, we invited former candidates who stood in the local board elections to share their experiences, challenges, and barriers, particularly in relation to low ethnic voter turnout and lack of ethnic people standing for local board. The discussion also focused on strategies to increase participation in the upcoming 2025 elections.

In addition, two members of the ECAP have been contributing regularly to the Advisory Panels Cross-Panel Elections Working Group, which was established to provide strategic guidance to Auckland Council in preparation for the 2025 elections. A number of practical tips and suggestions have been shared by the working group and positively received by the group.

- iii. The panel strongly advised on equitable opportunities for all Auckland Local Boards to develop an ethnic people's engagement or action plan. Whau and

Upper Harbour Local Boards have these in place. Higher emphasis must also be given to some of the larger ethnic populations in Counties Manukau District where many families experience higher deprivation circumstances.

- iv. The panel also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft background paper for the Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Policy Framework. We emphasised that any future framework must address the needs of our diverse communities—particularly young children, women, and their cultural and safety requirements. The panel reiterated the importance of ensuring safety is a core consideration across all public spaces.
- v. We provided advice on the Community Partners Programme, highlighting its potential to strengthen diversity and inclusion by ensuring ethnic communities have a meaningful voice in council decision-making. As part of this, the panel also identified several major ethnic community organisations that were missing from Auckland Council’s key stakeholder database and recommended their inclusion. We are grateful this has been actioned.
- vi. ECAP members have consistently emphasised the importance of improving representation, not only through graduate and internship programmes but also by broadening the inclusion of ethnic minority communities beyond the more commonly engaged Asian groups. Greater diversity and transparency are essential if the Council is to build genuine trust and equity with all of Auckland’s communities.
- vii. We provided advice on the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Framework. During this panel term, ECAP had the opportunity to engage with senior leaders from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team at Auckland Council. From the outset, ECAP has been vocal in calling for Auckland Council to demonstrate strong leadership and commitment to DEI—urging the Council to lead by example.
- viii. While earlier in the term limited data and reporting made it difficult to measure progress, ECAP welcomed the detailed presentation provided by the DEI team at the end of the term. This update showed a clearer strategic direction, greater transparency, and a renewed focus on embedding DEI across the organisation. It represents an important step forward after many years of advocacy from ECAP and previous panels.
- ix. ECAP acknowledges the shift towards stronger accountability and openness. Members appreciated the willingness of the DEI team to listen and respond to community perspectives and believe this approach will help build greater trust

and outcomes. It's encouraging to see meaningful progress made since the last two terms.

- x. Looking ahead, ECAP continues to highlight the importance of increasing representation, both through graduate and internship programmes and by broadening inclusion of ethnic minority communities beyond those most frequently engaged.



2. Wellbeing and Safety

Aim: Ethnic and migrant communities are safe (and feel a sense of safety) as they pursue their daily lives.

Key Focus Areas:

- a. Receive information on the council's current plan to address crime and safety and ensure the interests of ethnic and migrant communities are well represented.
- b. Ensure Auckland's small businesses are well informed of, and can access, Auckland Council and Government support to protect themselves from retail crime.

Actions:

- i. Water safety - Outdoor Water Safety: Recognising the disproportionately high drowning rates affecting ethnic communities, ECAP invited expert presenters to provide updates on water safety initiatives.
- ii. Parks and Community Facilities (PCF) & Partners: PCF presented an overview of their outdoor water safety strategy, including plans to improve infrastructure and increase the availability of Public Rescue Equipment (PRE) at high-risk parks and beaches. These initiatives aim to improve public safety and reduce drowning incidents, particularly among newly settled and migrant communities.
- iii. Drowning Prevention Auckland shared its localised, community-led approach to preventing drownings through education, infrastructure development, and policy support. Their work aligns closely with Auckland Council's safety strategy and highlights the need to build community capability alongside physical improvements. Our panel shared concerns and tips around how these could be further enhanced.
- iv. Public Transport and Community Safety: Auckland Transport (AT) – Safety Framework was presented following several incidents involving bus drivers and passengers, ECAP requested a high-level briefing from AT on their Safety Framework and communications strategy. ECAP provided feedback around better orientation of bus drivers, pastoral care support, de-escalation technique, and first aid training.
- v. Retail Crime and Small Business Protection: The NZ Police – National Retail Investigation Support Unit presented to us as part of ECAP's focus on safety

and small business wellbeing. The panel received a briefing on the efforts made to address rising incidents of retail crime. ECAP reiterated the importance of ensuring access to Auckland Council assistance for ethnic small businesses affected by such incidents. The panel acknowledges some positive improvements in this space especially the reduction in ram raids.

- vi. Safety at Public Events: ECAP members advocated for enhanced security and safety measures at major ethnic festivals and events such as Holi, Diwali, the Lantern Festival, and Vesakhi Mela, which attract large and diverse crowds. The Panel emphasised the need for risk management plans and visible safety protocols at these gatherings.
- vii. To build long-term resilience and visibility, ECAP provided advice on increasing the recruitment and visibility of ethnic volunteers in safety and emergency organisations, including Fire and Emergency NZ (FENZ) and Community Patrols NZ (CPNZ). Panel leaders have worked to raise awareness of these opportunities across ethnic communities.
- viii. Language Access and Ethnic Leadership in safety information. A key outcome of ECAP's ongoing advocacy is the promotion of translated safety information in major ethnic languages. The Panel continues to champion the role of ethnic leaders as trusted messengers in promoting safety, wellbeing, and emergency preparedness within their communities.



3. Economic Growth and Development

Aim: Ethnic and migrant businesses and workers can fully participate in Auckland's economy and prosperity.

Key Focus: Receive information on Auckland Council's procurement practices and support the inclusion of policies and practices that allows small local businesses to participate fully in Auckland Council's procurement for goods and services.

Actions:

- i. The ECAP is the only panel with economic growth and development as one of its focus areas. We believe that economic prosperity is crucial for all Aucklanders and New Zealand. In May 2025, the co-chairs of the panel requested and advocated for a joint co-chair led all advisory panel letters to the Mayor of Auckland Council. This joint letter highlights a mounting set of serious and interrelated pressures affecting all communities, particularly those already facing disadvantages. These include housing insecurity, food poverty, significant job losses, migration exploitation, inaccessibility of healthcare, emboldening of anti-Māori sentiment, transphobia and other forms of discrimination and harm. This letter was well received by the Mayor.
- ii. To support greater inclusion and economic participation of ethnic and migrant communities, the panel contributed feedback to the Auckland Council Long-Term Plan (LTP) and Annual Plan. We welcomed the opportunity to advise on key areas including urban regeneration, economic and cultural development, and the funding of major events, including the proposed bed levy.
- iii. We strongly supported initiatives that promote business, employment, and skills development for ethnic communities. The panel emphasised the significant role of entrepreneurship and the cultural economic contributions of ethnic communities to Auckland. We also highlighted the importance of enhancing Auckland's appeal as a tourist destination by leveraging its cultural diversity, a strategy that fosters both economic growth and community enrichment.
- iv. We advocated for continued investment in cultural infrastructure and support for significant festivals such as Diwali and the Lantern Festival, recognising their value in promoting cultural identity and driving economic activity.
- v. In addition, we provided feedback to the Auckland Council Regulatory Team on the community safety update, particularly advocating for accessible support for small businesses affected by retail crime. We emphasised the importance

of ensuring ethnic-owned small businesses can easily access Council assistance and crime prevention resources.

- vi. The Auckland Council Procurement Team shared updates on current procurement practices. We advocated for the inclusion of policies that enable greater participation of small local and ethnic businesses in the procurement of goods and services.
- vii. The co-chairs of the panel contributed perspectives to discussions around the Royal Commission of Inquiry into New Zealand's COVID-19 response, highlighting the disproportionate negative impacts experienced by ethnic businesses due to extended lockdowns and mandates.
- viii. The panel advocated for a robust engagement and strategy on how to work with relevant Business Councils that are based in Auckland.
- ix. During the panel session with the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and the Minister, members advocated for more inclusive business opportunities for Auckland's ethnic communities. They highlighted barriers faced by ethnic entrepreneurs and recommended targeted procurement, tailored support, and stronger partnerships with local government.
- x. The panel also gave feedback on the proposed bed tax, noting its potential impact on ethnic-owned accommodation and tourism businesses, as well as on visiting whānau.
- xi. Additionally, concerns were raised about proposed leasing arrangements at the port, particularly regarding job security for ethnic employees and long-term implications for community employment and local economic participation.

4. Transport

Aim: Ethnic and migrant communities are supported to address congestion through increased use of public and non-motorised transport.

Key Focus Areas:

- a. Receive information on public and non-motorised transport use by ethnic and migrant communities to understand and advocate for how usage can be significantly increased.
- b. Support Auckland Council and Auckland Transport's engagement and communication with ethnic and migrant communities on reducing reliance on private vehicles.

Actions:

- i. Ethnic communities strongly value a well-functioning transport system that is equitable, affordable, and fit for purpose. We appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on Auckland Transport's draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP), which outlines key proposals to shape the future of public transport in Tāmaki Makaurau.
- ii. The panel also contributed views on the rapid transit corridor investigations between Bringham Creek and the city centre, running alongside the Northwestern Motorway (State Highway 16). Members provided valuable feedback around the desired features and facilities at rapid transit stations that reflect cultural and safety needs of ethnic communities. In particular, this was about adequate language signages and safety systems.
- iii. The panel was briefed on Auckland Transport's draft Regional Land Transport Plan, which sets priorities and funding for the next 10 years. This was an opportunity to offer feedback into the consultation process and ensure the RLTP reflects the transport needs of all Aucklanders, including those from ethnic backgrounds.

5. Climate Action and Sustainability

Aim: Ethnic and migrant communities are informed and involved in action on, and resilience to the effects of climate change.

Key Focus Areas:

- a. Receive information on Auckland Council's efforts to address climate change and ensure ethnic and migrant communities are made aware of support available to move towards greater sustainability.
- b. Collaborate with other demographic advisory panels on climate action and resilience to provide joined up advice to Auckland Council.
- c. Ensure Auckland's emergency management system is responsive to the needs of ethnic and migrant communities during emergency events.

Actions:

- i. All feedback for the panel was based on [Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan](#). This provided the overarching and guided advice for all our priority areas. Following the Auckland Floods in January 2023, our collective concern remained that ethnic peoples have often been excluded from disaster risk reduction planning. Ethnic people have unique vulnerabilities as well as unique knowledge and resources as many have lived experiences of climate disasters. We have continued to advise all stakeholders to engage grassroots voices in all stages of disaster risk reduction efforts. These include planning and preparedness to response and recovery, ensuring their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. By promoting long-term resilience through building and strengthening community capacity and equitable access to resources, enhanced recovery is achieved.
- ii. We provided our feedback on the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2024 (Draft Waste Plan 2024).
- iii. We provided advice and co-authored the report from the panels on the Storm Recovery and Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan consultations. This helped shape the 5-year plan that determines how Auckland prepares for, responds to and recovers from disasters.
- iv. Storm Recovery and Resilience - we provided input to the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Plan addressing Māori partnership, community, economic, and environmental recovery. This included advice on thoughts on Making Space for

Water, council's proposed focus areas to manage our stormwater network and the region's resilience to flooding.

- v. Climate Action and Emergency Preparedness – We provided advice to the Auckland Emergency Management team on community disaster readiness and helped with the facilitation of ethnic peoples focus workshops at community level. This allowed community based ethnic organisations and social service providers to share the challenges that they face and the opportunities of collaboration through NGOs, faith-based organisations, and others to work together for emergency readiness and management. A recent hui organised by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities in Massey and the national Ethnic Advantage Conference further reinforced this message, stressing that addressing Auckland's emergency challenges requires a collective effort. Government agencies alone do not have the capacity or capability to respond effectively without the active involvement of communities.
- vi. Ethnic communities appreciated the opportunity to connect with Auckland Emergency Management, and it proved to be a valuable platform for community leaders to network and build long-term relationships. ECAP is also pleased to acknowledge the appointment of a new staff member who will serve as a dedicated liaison for ethnic communities in the area of emergency management (Senior Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community Readiness Advisor for Auckland Emergency Management).



Areas for Consideration to Improve

- Earlier and more consistent engagement between council departments and the panel is needed for timely and meaningful input.
- Increased resources would enable deeper community outreach and better data collection.
- Creating a feedback mechanism to track how panel advice is used would improve accountability and effectiveness.
- Clear strategy on how the Mayor's office (the Office) will work with panel members on engagement between the Office and international partners.

Community Involvement or Engagement

- The panel actively engaged with ethnic community leaders, organisations, and networks.
- Participation in community events and consultation sessions ensured diverse voices were heard and represented in council discussions.

Other Areas to Highlight

- The panel collaborated with other demographic advisory panels on shared issues such as housing, transport, and economic opportunity.
- Members contributed to multicultural and equity-focused strategy development within the council.

Reflections or Recommendations

- Continue investment in relationship-building and engagement with ethnic communities.
- Embed cultural competency and equity training within all levels of Auckland Council operations.
- Develop tools to evaluate the impact of panel advice on policy and service delivery.
- Encourage greater engagement with ethnic youth to support future community leadership.
- The contributions of ECAP members must be actively promoted by the council. There have been several missed opportunities to involve panel members in public discussions through media engagement.
- To support their visibility and effectiveness, panel members should be equipped with tools such as official email addresses and business cards.
- Auckland Council's communications team should provide regular and timely updates on the panel's work and achievements to ensure greater transparency and public awareness.





Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take ā-lwi o te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa

Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



'E Lē Tū Fa'amauga Se Tagata'

'No one succeeds alone, and no one suffers alone'

Fa'anānā Efeso Collins, Maiden Speech, New Zealand House of Representatives, 15 February 2024

This term 2022-2025, we lost one of our very best in Pacific leadership; Member of Parliament, Fa'anānā Efeso Collins. A former Councillor & Local Board Chair of the Auckland Council whānau. He was a close brother, mentor and inspiration to our panel and we dedicate this report to his memory and continued legacy.

E moni upu a le atunu'u, e pei ona saunoa le Afioga iā Fa'anānā; 'E Lē Tū Fa'amauga Se Tagata'. O le tagata ma lona aiga, o le tagata fo'i ma lona fa'asinomaga. E mo'omia le tatou galulue fa'atasi auā se manuia po'o se taeao mo le tatou atunu'u. Auā o le finagalo fo'i lea o Iesu, ina ia tatou maua le fealofani, aemaise le ola femulumulua'i. O le agaga lava lea a lenei komiti, o le tatou tutū fa'atasi e fa'aleo manaoga ma vaega e fa'alelei atili mo a tatou tagata Pasefika. Ia manuia tele le pulega a le tatou aai o Aukilani. Soifua ona o Iesu.

Key messages

Over this term, the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel (PPAP) provided culturally grounded, community-informed advice across a wide range of Auckland Council policy, strategy, plans and initiatives.

Our work focused on key priorities for Pacific communities including climate resilience, civic engagement including local body elections, emergency response, economic participation, cultural identity and equity.

The panel strengthened Pacific engagement and helped ensure our peoples' lived realities were reflected in Council decision-making.

We championed Pacific-led and talanoa-informed approaches hoping to shift how Council listens, engages, and responds to Pacific voices.

Through cross-panel collaboration and participatory forums, we helped amplify Pacific perspectives across the wider Council ecosystem.



Purpose

This report outlines the work and impact of the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel during the 2022–2025 term, including priorities, engagement, insights, and recommendations for future advisory practice.

Panel Overview

The PPAP is one of Auckland Council’s demographic advisory panels. The panel comprises members from diverse Pacific backgrounds, supported by council staff and liaised with by an elected councillor. Its purpose is to advise the council on issues affecting Pacific communities and to strengthen the responsiveness of policies and services delivered by Council.

Members of the panel

Panel Leadership

Co-Chairs: Litiana Karika and Seumanu Seuoti Simon Matāfai (elected August 2023).

Litiana Karika

Litiana, of Fijian, Samoan and Pākehā descent, was born and raised in Māngere currently residing in Takaanini. With a Master of Public Policy (First Class Honours) from the University of Auckland, she works as a policy professional at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, focusing on Pacific economic development. Her work is driven by a deep love for people and commitment to better outcomes for Pacific communities.

Seumanu Seuoti Simon Matāfai JP

One of Aotearoa’s youngest Justices of the Peace, Seumanu is a Kiwi-born Samoan with an orator chief title. After global youth advocacy roles with the UN and NGOs, he became the first Samoan elected to the Whau Local Board at age 24. He holds an MBA, a Postgrad in Law, and a BA in History and Music. A choir master and piano teacher, Seumanu also serves on the governance of Pasifika Festival and Whau Pasifika and produces the *K.o.k.o Samoa Youth Show* on Radio Samoa.

Panel Members

Arizona Haddon (resigned May 2025)

Of Samoan and Māori descent (Lu'ua, Musumusu, Waikato Tainui), Arizona is completing a Master's in Urban Planning and has a BA in Sociology. Her advocacy began at Massey University through the Pasifika Students' Association. She works in housing equity, mentors' Pacific students at the University of Auckland, and is a Research Assistant at Massey.

Evo Leota-Tupou

Founder of *Pacific Kids' Learning*, Evo is a proud Samoan mum of five from Ōtara. With a degree in Computer Graphics and Design, she is active in the EdTech and AI policy space. She serves on EdTechNZ, Tech Women NZ, and contributes to Te Whatu Ora's AI advisory group, advocating for children with disabilities.

Hainoame Fulivai

A New Zealand-born Tongan rooted in Mt Wellington, Hainoame is a mum of two and an alum of AGGS and the University of Auckland. With a recent Master's in Technology Futures, she brings 20+ years' experience in community development and social innovation. She co-chaired the 2020–2022 Panel, is Chair of the Pasifika Funders Network, and leads initiatives supporting Tongan women in digital innovation.

Hassana Kirkwood

Of Niuean, Māori, Fijian Indian, and Irish descent, Hassana is passionate about getting her people into education and employment. With over 7 years in recruitment, she also advocates for Pacific leadership in tech through FLINT. Based in Māngere, she is motivated by her young son to push for diverse representation in all sectors.

Mary Brown

Mary is of Fijian and Samoan heritage and was raised in Māngere. A seasoned educator with over 20 years of experience, she holds a Master's in Educational Leadership and is currently a principal in a Central Auckland faith-based school. Mary is committed to equity in education and has served on the Panel for two terms.

Mavae Ahio

First-generation NZ-born Tongan, Mavae is from Fua'amotu and Feletoa. Raised in South Auckland, he holds a BA in Anthropology and Geography, a Postgrad in Health Science, and a Master in Māori and Pacific Development (Hons). A former teacher and advisor in education and mental health, he now works as a Principal

Advisor at the Ministry of Education and serves as Youth Leader for the United Church of Tonga in NZ.

Penina Tu'unai (Saoatulagi-ole-Tagaloa Penina Ifopo)

A proud Samoan raised in Musumusu Fagaloa, Penina transitioned from 15 years in the public service to founding a social enterprise in 2020. With a Master's in Educational Leadership, she's held roles in union advocacy and school governance. A strong advocate for social justice, she is also a weaver, businesswoman, and community connector guided by faith, family, and alofa.

Seimoana Naisali

Seimoana, a mum of two, was raised on Auckland's North Shore with Tokelauan and Tuvaluan heritage. With a Master's in International Development, she has worked in NZ Police and now co-leads *Jobs For Mums*, promoting flexible work for caregivers. She recently represented NZ, Tokelau and Tuvalu at the U.S. Young Pacific Leaders conference.

Taitu'uga Aiolupotea Mirofora Mataafa-Komiti

From Lufilufi, Salesatele and Falelima, Taitu'uga is a mum of four and a Project Manager at Le Va. With BA (Hons) and MA (First Class Honours) in Pacific Studies, she previously lectured in Samoan Language and Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Her service is guided by values of love, family, and fa'aaloalo.

Vaifale Natano Melvin Le'avasā

A proud New Zealand Samoan from Solosolo, Vaiala, Moata'a and Vaimoso, Vaifale is deeply involved in community sport and research. He is a Quantity Surveyor and Research Assistant with a Bachelor in Construction Economics, a Master in Technological Futures, and is pursuing a Doctorate in Indigenous Development.

Note: one panel member resigned during the term; Arizona Haddon in May 2025.

Supported by Council Staff and Elected Members

We have been supported by a number of Council staff in different capacities throughout our term, but we wanted to name and honour some specific staff members for their incredible contributions to helping our panel do the best work we can. You have been unwavering in your service and support of this kaupapa and we are so grateful for all your time, energy, support and care over the past three years.

Supporting Staff:

Our deepest gratitude to:

- Co-Lead Officers – Italia Toeileiu and Paul Pua
- Governance Advisor - Mike Giddey
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

We also want to offer our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the amazing, elected members who have been incredibly supportive and engaged throughout our term:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Lotu Fuli
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey



Experiences of Our Members — Reflections from the Panel

Our time on the PPAP has been marked by deep purpose, unity, and service. Serving on this panel was more than an advisory role, it was a sacred responsibility to uplift our Pacific communities and ensure their voices were embedded meaningfully in Auckland Council decision-making. Through our shared experiences, we have grown as leaders, advocates, and navigators of change.

Serving with Purpose and Courage

We came to this work with open hearts and a shared conviction that our voices, rooted in community, matter. Many of us viewed this role as a calling, an opportunity to advocate, influence, and reflect the values, needs, and realities of our people across Tāmaki Makaurau. It was empowering to be part of a space where our perspectives were taken seriously and where we could act as a bridge between our communities and Council.

We also gained a deeper understanding of how Auckland Council operates, and the immense effort involved in managing a city as diverse and complex as ours. Through this panel, governance and decision-making became more accessible. What once felt distant or closed off began to feel like a space where we could contribute meaningfully.

“Far too often, decision-making spaces—even the Pacific ones—can be dominated by competing interests... It’s crucial that advisory panels like PPAP remain safe and inclusive spaces for open dialogue, even when it’s uncomfortable.”

— *Hainoame Fulivai*

Being part of PPAP reminded us that Pacific voices can influence real change. We were heard, and that mattered. And, in the spirit of Pacific warmth, we’ll admit, we also loved sharing kai during our long meetings.

“Don’t be afraid to speak up—you are there for a reason. Work together as a team, and stay grounded in who we are as tagata ole moana.”

— *Penina Ifopo*

Working in Pacific-Led and Culturally Grounded Ways

A defining feature of our experience has been the way we worked together as Pacific peoples. We honoured the vā, our relationships, with each other, our communities, and with Council. From the outset, we intentionally created spaces where talanoa could happen in ways that felt safe, purposeful, and distinctly Pacific. These relational ways of working helped build trust, warmth, and collective strength.

We moved together as a collective, guided by shared values and a commitment to serve. Our process was as important as the outcomes. We believe this is what true Pacific leadership looks like: values-led, people-first, and grounded in service.

We also championed the importance of culturally aligned engagement, encouraging Auckland Council and stakeholders to work in ways that reflect Indigenous protocols and practices. Supporting others to better understand where their approaches could improve was a core part of our work.

“PPAP provides a safe and supportive environment to express both the challenges and celebrations of our community.”

— *Melvin Leavasa*



Diverse Voices, Shared Vision

We brought together a wide range of perspectives from across Auckland, South, West, Central, and from different walks of life: youth leaders, educators, public servants, creatives, health professionals, and grassroots community advocates. This diversity gave our advice nuance and depth and reflected the many lived realities of our Pacific families.

We intentionally connected with communities, not just through consultation, but through genuine relationship-building. We hope our fono and talanoa spaces were marked by our people feeling seen and heard. That trust is something we held with deep care. We also did our best to recognise and honour the work of panels before us, continuing their legacy while building new layers of vision and advocacy. This intergenerational continuity is something we are especially proud of.

Even when our views differed, we listened with empathy and upheld one another with respect. That spirit of unity anchored everything we did.

Making an Impact Together

We are proud of what we achieved together. Our highlights include:

Hosting community events like the Emergency Management Fono in Ōtara and our online Civics talanoa that created culturally safe and accessible spaces for engagement. Even those who couldn't attend in person felt the impact, our families shared how informative and empowering the emergency management event was, and how it made our work visible. We also heard that people felt inspired and uplifted by our civics engagement talanoa.

Supporting the development of Auckland Council's emergency response plans post-flooding, ensuring that Pacific needs and realities shaped this critical work.

Providing culturally grounded, evidence-informed advice on key policy areas, amplifying Pacific voices in places where they've long been underrepresented.

“Representation matters. Our advisory panel often gives grassroots realities that are true reflections of our communities.”

— *Mary Brown*

Encouraging more meaningful and respectful engagement between Council and Pacific communities by demonstrating how to connect in ways that resonate with

our cultural values. A couple of example of this has been through the local body elections working group and through the Pacific Policy Toolkit Working Group.

Our strongest achievements weren't just in the policies influenced, but in the trust, we built, the leadership we modelled, and the relationships we strengthened.

Navigating Challenges

We also acknowledge the challenges we faced. The limited timeframes and the wide scope of issues meant we had to be strategic and focused. We came in with aspirational goals, quickly being reminded that progress in government is slow and constrained by competing timelines, priorities and resourcing.

Yet even in that space, we saw movement, small, vital shifts that signal change. We also recognised the need for better cross-panel alignment and earlier engagement from Council so that our voices could shape the direction of decisions, not just respond to them.

We embraced the challenge of working in these spaces while staying grounded in who we are, knowing that our communities were with us every step of the way.



Advice for Incoming Panel Members

Be curious and ask questions, especially the “basic” ones. They open the door for deeper understanding for all around the table.

Stay grounded in your community. You’re not there to speak for yourself, but for the many who raised, taught, and walk beside you.

Take time to build strong relationships with one another. Our impact is greatest when we move as a collective.

Be brave. Your presence is powerful. Don’t hold back.

Be pragmatic, realistic and driven about what you can achieve. Keep it simple and stick to your priorities.

“Come in with an open mind, and don’t be afraid to ask questions or speak up—that’s exactly why you’re here.”

— *Hassana Kirkwood*

“This role should be treated as a sacred calling for your full heart and unwavering commitment to our Pacific people.”

— *Mavae Ahio*



Strategic Direction

A Strategic Work Programme was developed through a series of workshops (July–October 2023), and endorsed by the Planning, Environment and Parks Committee. This framework guided the panels focus areas, aligning with Auckland Council’s strategic priorities.

Work programme priorities and achievements

General commentary

The Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel has played a key role in advising Auckland Council on issues impacting Pacific communities, with significant contributions across climate justice, civic participation, cultural competency, equity, and economic inclusion. Key achievements include influencing emergency management readiness, enhancing Pacific-focused climate research, supporting democratic engagement through local body election forums, and advising on culturally responsive policy tools.

“We showed that Pacific participation is not just about being present—it’s about being effective, relational, and transformative.”

— *Taitu’uga Mirofora Mata’afa-Komiti*

The panel also engaged in diverse policy areas such as transport, public health, AI, and local planning. While we believe our talanoa-informed approach has enriched Auckland Council decision-making, there remain opportunities to improve timing, communication, and the integration of their advice into final outcomes.

Our Engagement Approach

Throughout the term, the Panel applied a talanoa-informed model of engagement, placing Pacific cultural values, lived experience, and relational leadership at the heart of our work. This approach enriched council decision-making across health, planning, and climate spaces.

“We didn’t just consult—we connected. That level of face-to-face, relationship-based engagement built trust and allowed people to feel heard in a system that can often feel distant.”

— *Seimoana Naisali*

“We created a space where talanoa could happen in a way that felt safe, purposeful, and Pacific.”

— *Taitu’uga Mirofora Mata’afa-Komiti*

Collaborative Leadership

We participated actively in Co-Chairs Forums, aligning our efforts with other advisory panels and supporting a collective voice on shared priorities.

The following is a list of activities that we undertook throughout our term in the various areas signalled above:

Climate Justice and Resilience

- Input into Auckland Emergency Management’s readiness programme.
- Partnered on research regarding Pacific Aucklanders and climate change, including adaptation and community engagement.
- Cross-panel feedback post-storm recovery shared with the Governing Body (Sept 2023).
- Successfully hosted a community engagement on emergency management event (July 2024), followed by a debrief and learnings session.

Civic Engagement, Participation and democracy

- Ongoing involvement in the cross-panel Elections Working Group, providing input on civic campaigns and community outreach initiatives.
- Supported participatory LTP forums and submitted feedback to the Mayor and Governing Body.
- Contributed to the Representation Review and participated in Local Board forums.
- Hosted a successful community engagement on local body elections.

Transport

- Auckland Transport Regional Public Transport Plan
- Regional Land Transport Plan
- City Centre Overnight Parking Changes
- Northwest Rapid Transit

Core Council Business

- Long Term Plan
- Annual Budget

Cultural Competence

- Advised on Pacific cultural competency training and assisted in the development of Pacific Policy Toolkit for council staff.
- Participated in engagements with Pacific communities on annual budget and local body elections.
- Advised on culturally appropriate and inclusive engagement for the Regional Pest Management Plan and tā tatau bylaw.

Economic Participation and Employment

- Reviewed and advised on the Good Employer Matrix to strengthen Pacific employment outcomes.

Equity and Inclusion

- Engagement with council's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion workstreams.

- Advocated for inclusive approaches across planning documents like the Waste Management Plan, Long-Term Plan, and Annual Plan.
- Provided feedback on Ara Moana Pasifika Strategy updates.

Bespoke and responsive engagement

- We also provided advice and insights across a wide range of council areas including:
 - NZ Royal Commission COVID-19
 - Play Advocacy
 - Open Space, Sport and Rec Policy Framework
 - Regional Pest Management Plan
 - Dog walking
 - Cemetery by law
 - Welcoming Communities Programme
 - Food and climate projects
 - Artificial intelligence.



Recommendations for Auckland Council

We encourage Auckland Council to strengthen its partnership with advisory panels by embedding more inclusive and culturally grounded approaches throughout its work. In particular, we recommend:

Involve us early: Our advice is most valuable and impactful when considered from the outset. Early engagement enables meaningful influence, not just retrospective feedback.

Close the loop: Clearly communicate how our input has shaped decisions. This builds trust, accountability, and demonstrates that our voices matter.

Invest in capability: Continue to support staff who understand the cultural, strategic, and relational dimensions of working with diverse communities. This expertise is essential to effective engagement.

Recognise lived experience as expertise: Our advice is rooted in the day-to-day realities of Pacific peoples across Tāmaki Makaurau. This on-the-ground insight is a vital source of knowledge.

Embed talanoa: Make talanoa-informed approaches standard practice across consultation and engagement. This reflects how our communities share, learn, and make decisions together.

Strengthen integration: Ensure there are robust mechanisms for our feedback to be carried through into final decisions—not lost in process.

Support Pacific-led research: Expand initiatives led by Pacific researchers, especially in areas like climate, health, and employment where community-driven insights are urgently needed.

Build local relationships: Establish enduring relationships between advisory panels and Local Boards. These links are key to aligning grassroots knowledge with local decision-making.

Keep participatory planning alive: Maintain community forums and participatory approaches in planning processes beyond election cycles. These spaces help keep the work grounded and inclusive.

Closing Remarks

As our term on the Pacific Peoples Advisory Panel comes to an end, we look back with full hearts. This wasn't just a role or a meeting to attend, it was a calling. A space where we brought our whole selves, our communities, and our cultures into rooms where decisions are made.

We came with purpose, guided by our values and our love for our people. Every piece of advice, every talanoa, every forum or submission we contributed to came from a deep desire to uplift Pacific voices across Tāmaki Makaurau. We spoke not for ourselves, but for the villages, families, and generations we carry with us.

We're proud of what we've been able to achieve together, from building stronger relationships between Council and Pacific communities, to influencing key policies in ways that honour our ways of knowing and being. We made space for our youth, our elders, our aiga and kāinga. And in doing so, we hope we helped shape a more inclusive and responsive Auckland.

It wasn't always easy. We navigated time pressures, complex systems, and moments of uncertainty. But we stayed grounded. We stayed together. And we never lost sight of why we were here.

To those who come after us, be bold. Lead with heart. Trust in the strength of your culture and your community. And remember that your voice matters.

To Auckland Council, we thank you for the opportunity to serve. We ask that you continue to honour Pacific perspectives not just by inviting us in, but by truly partnering with us. Make space for talanoa, value lived experience as expertise and walk alongside us as we build a better future together.

To our communities, you were at the centre of it all. This work was always for you.

Fakafetai, vinaka vakalevu, malo 'aupito, fa'afetai tele lava, kia ora.





Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Hapori Iwi
Takatāpui

Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



To: His Worship the Mayor and Auckland Council,

Over the last three years, the Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel (RCAP) has worked closely with Auckland Council to support a safer, more inclusive and responsive city for rainbow communities across Tāmaki Makaurau. We've brought lived experience, critical feedback, and practical ideas to the table, always grounded in what our people are seeing, feeling and experiencing.

This report is a summary of our key priorities, the mahi we've done, the shifts we've seen, and where we believe the next panel needs to go.

Members of the panel

Co-Chairs:

- Joshua Martin
- Teresa Platt

Panel Members:

- Ashe Black (joined February 2024)
- Ella Sargison
- Eric Chou
- Luca Bree (joined February 2024)
- Luis Meirelles
- Shayde Young (joined February 2024)
- Theo van de Klundert
- Tux Hika

Note: one panel member resigned during the term; Dave Hati in October 2024.

Supporting Staff:

- Lead Officer – Maclean Grindell
- Governance Advisor – Duncan Glasgow
- Principal Advisor Panels - Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Richard Hills
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey

Our focus

At the start of our term, we confirmed three main areas of focus:

- Building rainbow cultural competency across Auckland Council, especially in frontline and public-facing roles.
- Strengthening engagement with rainbow communities across Tāmaki Makaurau, with a focus on takatāpui, Pacific and Asian voices.
- Addressing housing insecurity, mental health and cost of living pressures impacting our communities.

These priorities shaped our strategic workplan and were revisited throughout the term as we responded to emerging issues and opportunities.



Year-by-year reflection

2023

We began with inductions, planning, and early cross-panel sessions, and then quickly got to work. One of our first major engagements was with the Royal Commission into the COVID-19 response. We shared the impacts of lockdowns on rainbow people in Tāmaki Makaurau — including feeling unsafe in our own homes, disconnected from community, and unsupported by systems not built for us. At the same time, we acknowledged that lockdowns were necessary and saved lives. It was a chance to reflect honestly on what worked and what didn't.

This year also included a mid-term recruitment process, where we reached into our networks to bring in new voices — particularly trans, Māori and senior trans representation. This worked well because it prioritised lived experience and community connection. But the process needs improvement. Recruitment should start by engaging with community, not just those already in governance spaces. It's also important that there's a handover between outgoing and incoming panels so people are set up to succeed.

2024

This was our biggest year. We supported cross-panel advice on emergency management and storm recovery, participated in the Governance Model forum, engaged in multiple forums on the Long-Term Plan, and provided input into the Regional Land Transport Plan, the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan, and inclusion initiatives across Auckland Council.

One of our most positive relationships has been with Auckland Emergency Management, who kept returning to seek our views and genuinely worked to build their approach alongside us. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team also started engaging more regularly, showing up to nearly every hui and becoming active partners in the mahi.

The cross-panel work on the Long-Term Plan stood out. We shared priorities, shaped the joint presentation, and sat together with Council leadership to provide honest, practical advice. It was one of the clearest examples of how the panels can add value when they collaborate meaningfully.

2025

In May we held a community hui at Everybody Eats in Glen Innes. This was a highlight. It brought together voices we rarely hear in formal spaces and created space for whakaaro about safety, belonging, and what needs to change in the city. The kōrero was honest and powerful. Those voices were a gift and we believe future panels need to honour that by taking their feedback forward.

This year we also saw a direct impact from our advocacy. Rainbow Games has now secured funding from Auckland Unlimited following our engagement with their team. While our initial concerns about the Gay Games withdrawal were met with silence, our persistence led to a meeting with CEO Nick Hill. That follow-through mattered and shows why this panel needs to keep pushing when accountability is lacking. Ongoing council and CCO relationships critical to rainbow communities should be identified and maintained via RCAP processes.

Proud moments

- The way Auckland Council responded to the rainbow crossing being painted over and the attack at Drag Storytime. We had direct access to Auckland Council and Police. The support was immediate and visible. The CEO's and Mayor's immediate statements condemning the violence was deeply appreciated by our communities.
- The growth in cross-panel collaboration. We saw shared issues like housing, transport and safety being addressed more cohesively.
- Seeing staff and elected members show up consistently. Councillors Hills and Fairey were strong allies throughout our term. We also want to acknowledge the work of Victoria, MacLean, Milly and Duncan, who backed us every step of the way. Due to the commitment of staff, the panels have been engaged more consistently and effectively with all areas of council and CCOs and, critically, with the long-term planning and emergency and disaster response.

The panels continue to provide the voice of our communities and are a valuable resource for both staff and elected members.

Challenges and recommendations

- Meeting frequency was a barrier. Having hui every four to six weeks limited what we could achieve because the meetings were too far apart. We recommend shifting to monthly hui, alternating between in-person and online. That would support relationship building and help the panel respond more quickly to community issues.
- Recruitment still leans toward the “usual suspects.” Future recruitment should remain focused on reaching new people who reflect the diversity of our communities. The onboarding processes have improved immeasurably, and this panel has been able to learn their role quickly and become effective in good time. Education, onboarding, and better succession planning are essential.

Some organisations and teams were slow to engage. The termination of the Gay Games 2030 bid by Tataki Auckland Unlimited (TAU) was a surprise to many in the rainbow community who had worked so hard towards it and for the associated Rainbow Games Tamaki Makaurau. Despite our clear connection to that kaupapa, we (and the Governing Body) were not approached for feedback. There is immense societal value associated with major events such as the Gay Games and the Rainbow Games and in our increasingly homophobic and transphobic environment our communities need as much support as we can provide. Overall, we were disappointed with decisions made by TAU and recommend that stronger internal accountability is needed.

Looking ahead

Some of our planned work is still in progress. The Rainbow Engagement Guidelines continue to need review and to be embedded in the organisation. More than a document, these guidelines should lead practice, performance expectations, and the culture of service at every level of Council.

We also see the need for:

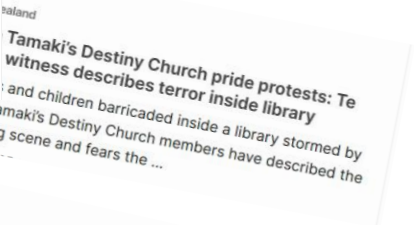
- More community hui, held across the region, not just in the city, so that we can hear rainbow voices all over the city.
- Continued work on housing and wellbeing, as our rainbow youth continue to be adversely affected by increased cost of living and housing crises, intersected with homophobia.
- Better use of data, insights and research to inform policy for rainbow Aucklanders.

Final thoughts

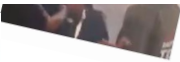
Unfortunately for us, the panel provided advice during a time when transphobia and homophobia is increasing in Aotearoa, supported largely by loud homophobic rhetoric in the USA. These were some of the headlines:



New Zealand
Rainbow crossing on Auckland's Karangahape Rd painted over, police open investigation
Police are investigating after white paint was poured over the rainbow crossing on Karangahape Rd in Auckland overnight. Nobody has taken responsibility ...
28 Mar 2024



New Zealand
Tamaki's Destiny Church pride protests: Te Atatu witness describes terror inside library
and children barricaded inside a library stormed by ...
Brian Tamaki's Destiny Church members have described the terrifying scene and fears the ...



New Zealand
Destiny Church protests: Teenager concussed after violent attack at Te Atatu, West Auckland event
16 Feb 2025



Kahu
Police say not enough evidence to prosecute Brian Tamaki over Te Atatu Community Centre incident
Senior police officers have concluded there was insufficient evidence to charge Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki with allegedly inciting violence at a ...



New Zealand
Auckland Pride warns of US influence on NZ anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment - The Front Page
13 Feb 2025



New Zealand
'Lil Gay Out:' Hobsonville Point Secondary School cancels LGBTQ+ event after protest threats
21 May 2025



New Zealand
All the ways Trump wants to exclude trans people from public life
From passports to health care, the White House is trying to make it harder for transgender Americans to live openly and safely. Here's a look at the executive orders and their impact.



The Supreme Court Dealt A Blow to Trans Rights. Here's How to Take Action



Politics
Winston Peters, NZ First follow Donald Trump's anti-DEI path with new Bill
07 Mar 2025



News > World > Americas > US politics
Newsmax host hysterically rages that California wildfires are 'death by DEI'



Things to know about how Trump's policies target transgender people
Trump's executive order on military service ...
... efforts to eradicate "gender ideology" ...
... transgender people from ...



Auckland Council
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau

Fortunately, this panel was able to speak up when harm occurred, advise on critical policies, and build strong relationships with those in decision-making roles. The panel offered a space for honest advice and real impact. We developed relationships with the Mayor, governing body members, Police and senior council staff who we could reach out to in times of turmoil and ask for help for our communities. In every instance we received positive responses and help where we needed it.

To the next panel: meet in person when you can. Build strong relationships. Don't hold back. Your voice is valuable, and this table exists so our communities are heard.

Ngā mihi nui,

Josh Martin and Teresa Platt

Co-Chairs

Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel 2022 to 2025

Tāmaki Makaurau.



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Kaumātua

Seniors Advisory Panel

A summary of the Panel's aims and achievements during the 2022 – 2025 term.

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Nau mai, Haere Mai, Talofa Lava, Malo e Lelei, Ni Sa Bula, Faalalofa Lahi atu, Kia Orana, Ni Hao, Annyeonghaseyo, Salam, Namaste and Greetings.

Demographic Advisory Panel Member's Role:

Panel members advise Auckland Council's Governing Body, policy teams, staff teams, and organisations on many significant regional policies, plans and initiatives that affect the daily lives and wellbeing of New Zealanders, now and for future generations. Their involvement helps Council members and staff understand the perspectives of Auckland's diverse communities, and helps ensure that political decisions, organisational actions and service delivery meet the needs of all Aucklanders and harness the opportunities diversity brings. The aim is that by developing strong, collaborative and professional working relationships with Council members and staff and between Panel members, everyone will be enabled to perform their role to the best of their ability.

Auckland Council is the largest council in Australasia, representing more than 1.7 million Aucklanders, and stretching from Te Hana in the north to Franklin in the south. It has a total proposed operating expenditure for 2023/24 of \$5.3 billion. Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland is New Zealand's youngest and most ethnically diverse region with over 200 ethnicities. By 2038, Māori, Pacific, and Asian peoples are projected to make up a majority of the city's population. As communities have grown, socio-economic pressures, sense of belonging and inclusion, and support for new migrants have remained challenges, and there are low levels of participation in many civic activities across some community sectors. Demographic Advisory Panels are one way to help Auckland Council understand and meet these challenges and opportunities. And Panel members take their experiences and new knowledge back to their diverse communities, encouraging and enabling their participation in creating a better future for our city.

Members of the panel

Co-Chairs:

- Dr Claire Dale
- Susanne Tapsell

Panel Members:

- Fia Turner
- Gavin Jones, MNZM
- Gayle Marshall, QSM
- Janis McArdle
- Leigh Featherstone
- Lindsay Waugh.
- Zari Fazelnia

Note: two panel members resigned during the term, Prof. Edwina Pio Co-Chaired until October 2024 when Susanne Tapsell was elected, and member Bruce Davies, JP until June 2025.

Supporting Staff:

- Co-Lead Officers – John Nash and Kathryn Hickling
- Governance Advisor – Phoebe Chiquet-Kaan
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Alf Filipaina
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey

Seniors Advisory Panel's Chosen Priorities, Actions and Achievements

In addition to engaging with Auckland Council staff and community groups and providing feedback on projects, plans and issues brought to them, the Panel has chosen the five following priorities, and provides here some notes on their actions and achievements.

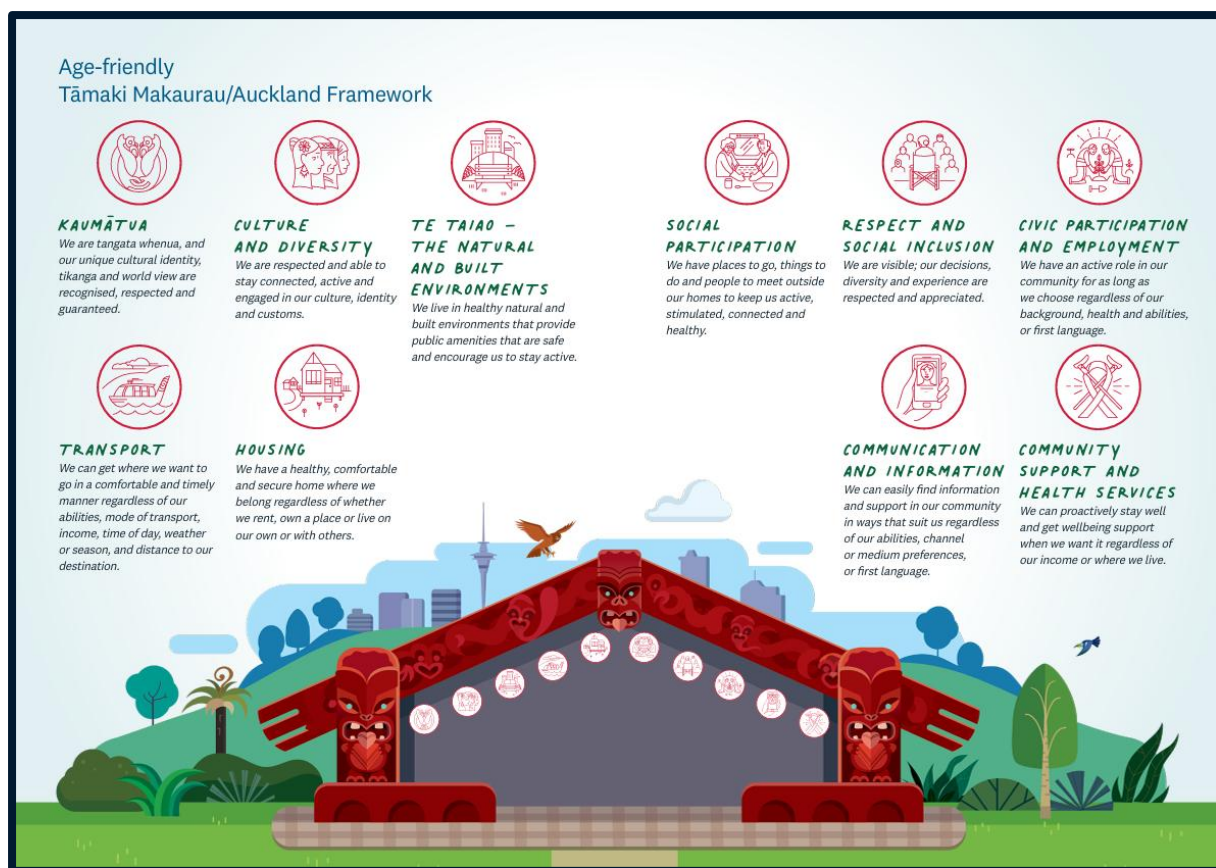
1. Tāmaki Makaurau Tauawhi Kaumātua Age Friendly Auckland Plan implementation.

Auckland's population, like most of Aotearoa's population, is ageing. It is expected that those aged 65 years and over will increase to a projected 19% by 2038. [In 2024](#), the proportion of people 65 years and older was 13.1% in Auckland, versus New Zealand overall being 16.5%. The proportion of young people (0-14) as 18.9% compared with the national 18.5%. Work by the first Seniors Advisory Panel led to the Age Friendly Auckland (AFA) Plan being accepted into the WHO in March 2022. As the population projections and the age-friendly guidelines indicate, for a city to be age-friendly, it needs to function well in meeting the needs of all ages.

The AFA Plan's aims are:

- to improve the wellbeing and quality of life for older Aucklanders by creating an inclusive, age-friendly city;
- to future-proof our region given the rapid growth in numbers of those aged 65+; and
- to identify and guide action to support those most in need.

The Plan draws on Māori concepts (e.g. manaakitanga, wairuatanga) and World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Cities Framework, and highlights the unique cultural identity of Māori kaumātua and the growing diversity of Auckland's senior population.



Auckland Council established Te Rōpū Whakamana ki te Ao, the Age-friendly Auckland Implementation Group in 2023. Two Seniors Advisory Panel members sit on Te Rōpū. Auckland Council staff managing Te Rōpū regularly attend Panel meetings to update the Panel on progress and achievements. A main contribution towards an age-friendly Auckland is the annual public symposium for report-back and celebration.

The Panel is concerned that no Local Board representatives attend these meetings, although the 2024 Annual Report shows Local Boards are the ‘Action Owners’, of approximately 37 actions. NGO’s own approximately 41 actions, and ‘Other’ Council departments own approximately 22 actions. Action Owners are responsible for delivery, but many of the actions are described in the 2024 report as either: stalled, No Info, or progressing, and little information is provided around completion dates.

The Panel has regularly discussed possible ways to increase the scope, visibility and reality of Auckland’s age-friendliness. A small team hui after the June 2025 Panel meeting proposed actions to be recommended for adoption at the August Panel meeting:

- a) To develop a strategic plan for Seniors Advisory Panel that aligns with AFA direction and outlines how to work well with Local Boards to support creation and completion of their AFA actions;
- b) to lobby local boards and Auckland Council for funding a dedicated AFA co-ordinator to work with Council, local boards, Action Owners and AFA National Network (Office for Seniors); and
- c) add a standing item to the Seniors Advisory Panel agenda for AFA so Panel members can bring relevant issues to the meeting for the Panel's AFA representatives to consider referring within AFA at Council. Such items would need to be consistent with the AFA strategic purpose and directly related to Auckland Council functions and responsibilities.



2. Housing:

Where we live and what we live in plays a major role in our health and wellbeing. Depleted stocks of Senior Housing, rising rents, increasing house and apartment costs and trends to large, largely unaffordable retirement villages, are increasingly locking seniors out of the housing market. Auckland Council plays a significant role in establishing the planning and policy framework for housing (including social housing) and being a housing provider via its partnership with Selwyn in Haumaru Housing.

The Panel lobbies strongly to the council and Central Government representatives and CCOs regarding the urgent and comprehensive action required to address the looming crisis in senior housing. In March 2024, the Panel met with Auckland Council planners to discuss seniors housing needs including housing design, size, assisting seniors to age in place; and advocating for the provision of housing suitable for seniors to be located on bus routes and within walking distance of shops, community centres, public spaces. In June 2024, the Panel met with Haumaru Housing representatives to identify ways we can work together on housing for seniors.

Staff from Kāinga Ora presented on their mahi, including age friendly Auckland targets and aspects like ensuring at least 15% of all Kāinga Ora public housing new builds are built to Universal Design standards. Also, homes in various new Kāinga Ora developments are dedicated as being suitable for a variety of needs and targeted to older people, including 52 new homes for older Aucklanders in Northcote through a collaboration with Eke Panuku and Haumaru Housing. Nevertheless, the visible increase in the numbers of senior homeless people in both the city and the suburbs requires a more co-ordinated and vigorous response.

In May 2025, Panel members attended the online forum hosted by the Coalition to End Womens Homelessness. That this group have researched the impact on older women as a particular group is of interest to this Panel. The group has highlighted that the emergency housing that does exist is not always appropriate for women and in particular women with disabilities. Both these housing issues are of deep concern to the Panel.

In August, based on these learnings, ['Navigating Housing and Homelessness in 2025'](#) was the keynote presentation at a Professional Development Conference in West Auckland, a hui for people working with clients with a housing or homelessness issue. This presentation included two particularly distressing statistics: New Zealand has the highest level of homelessness per capita in the OECD; and globally, the fastest rate of increasing homelessness is among older people.

3. Safety:

Safety covers a range of locations, events and activities. Seniors can feel unsafe in their homes, especially if they live alone as many do, and when out and about in their communities. They can also struggle to get the help they need when safety issues arise. These issues collectively can negatively impact on seniors' health and wellbeing. Such issues were foregrounded in the floods of Auckland Anniversary Weekend 2023.

Emergency Management. Through 2023 and 2024, Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) team, Local Boards, and Fire and Ambulance services met with representatives of the Advisory Panels and community groups to identify weaknesses and possible improvements in future weather emergency responses. As a result of this consultation, Local Board Emergency Readiness and Response Plans were developed that provide clear, practical guidance to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters like flooding. These Local Plans also provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Auckland Emergency Management, Auckland Council, the Local Board, individuals and communities across “the four Rs of emergency management: reduction, readiness, response and recovery”. Printed copies of the Plan are available in libraries and community centres, and a digital version is on the Auckland Council website.

Discussion with the Panels highlighted some areas requiring immediate attention:

- a) Acknowledge and then break down the barriers faced by disabled people in emergencies, recognising that an ageing population means increasing numbers of people with disabilities.
- b) Ensure communities are aware of the locations of their civil defence centres, and ensure those centres can accommodate people with disabilities, mothers with babies and small children, and non-English speakers.
- c) Ensure multi-story apartment dwellers and managers have an emergency plan. This was completed at a separate meeting between Panel representatives and the central area Community Resilience and Recovery Advisor at Fire and Emergency New Zealand. Auckland Emergency Management in August 2024.

Public Transport. Sadly, safety on public transport is also increasingly an issue, not only from other passengers, but from careless and thoughtless drivers. The Panel strongly recommended that passenger care and safety be included in bus driver training, and requested assurance that this change was adopted by bus companies.

Safety and Accessibility in the CBD. After a discussion paper on safety and accessibility was presented at the April 2024 meeting, a further exercise and paper created by Panel members was circulated ahead of the August meeting which identified safety and accessibility challenges, hazards, risks, issues and positive surprises experienced by seniors navigating the Auckland CBD. The stated assumption of this exercise was that matters of safety and accessibility identified in the CBD may also be found in the other main centres in Tamaki Makarau. After this exercise, shared widely within Council, the 2025 version of [The Auckland Design Manual](#) contained a similar videoed walking tour of the CBD.

Dogs. Another concerning issue is the number of roaming off-leash dogs in streets and parks. Proposed changes to dog walking policy and bylaw were presented by Auckland Council staff, and the Panel recommended limiting the number of dogs that may be walked on a leash in an on-leash area, and off a leash in an off-leash area. The Panel recommended that dog walkers be required to be licensed, so they do not put people at risk when they are walking, for example, 12 dogs in a public place.



Digital Literacy. Rapid technological change is impacting communities in multiple ways. The widespread closure of local bank branches and increasing reliance on online banking for all transactions has put many seniors who are not digitally competent and/or not digitally equipped, at risk. Libraries and community centres provide critical support and learning hubs. Many Local Boards support organisations like [Digital Seniors](#) which provide free upskilling opportunities, but a significant risk remains, and online scams continue to inflict great damage to retirement plans.

4. Access to Services:

Despite seniors being an increasingly larger percentage of the population, decisions on access to services are made mostly by younger people and the needs of seniors can easily be overlooked.

Community facilities Libraries and community centres remain the main places where seniors can easily access information in a safe environment and these cannot be allowed to close or be less available. The guiding principle of age-friendly is that when something is good for seniors it is good for all ages and abilities. When we make Auckland more accessible and attractive for older persons, we make it more accessible and attractive for everyone.

Bus-stops are increasingly raised as an issue: their location, whether shelter is provided, and their proximity to connecting bus services. The Panel provided feedback on the identified accessibility constraints to services in Auckland, in particular the hospital bus no longer stops on the same wharf as the Waiheke Ferry. Co-chairs from the Seniors Advisory Panel and Disability Advisory Panel met with the CE's and staff from Auckland Transport and Eke Panuku to discuss issues in those CCO's scope of strategic interest to the Panels, including addressing the Waiheke Local Board's concerns. In response, AT advised the bus cannot safely and practically operate from the wharf, although taxis proliferate on the other side of the terminal. AT advocated using the total mobility discount, acknowledging difficulties with peak demand.

Total Mobility Card Issues around the difficulty of accessing a Total Mobility Card were raised after AT updated the Panel on a recent public survey at the May meeting. Concerns were raised about the survey methodology and its bias towards technologically literate; driver (taxi and bus) behaviour and education as there were known occasions of bus drivers querying evidence of need and challenging the right for support person/PlusOne companion to travel; and trip limits on taxis with preferred drivers (specifically Auckland Co-op Taxis). An additional issue was vision

impaired people missing busses because they didn't stop at the head of the queue. A further issue was raised at a later meeting around the difficulty of accessing a TMC, and the apparent lack of knowledge of the process by purported approvers and providers.

Parks A December 2024 presentation from Auckland Council staff sought feedback on mapping and accessibility for parks. The need for facilities for adults to sit and play to be integrated with and adjacent to childrens' playgrounds was discussed. Another issue raised was accessibility, for example the different requirements for walkers versus wheelchairs for gradient and smooth paths, and the necessity for wayfinding boards providing the relevant information. Also noted: many older people do not find digital interactive media helpful, so static signs at parks and on print-outs of maps are necessary. Parks, playgrounds and public spaces are vital for assisting with good mental health when economic and social problems proliferate. It is vital that such places are accessible, safe, well-lit and well-maintained.



5. Transport:

Transport and Access proved to be overlapping priorities. On separate occasions, Seniors Advisory Panel members have attended hui on the Northwest Rapid Transit, the City Centre Plan, and the City Centre Parking Management Plan. The Panel provided feedback on the Consultation Process for Auckland Transport’s Draft Regional Land Transport Plan.

Parking A main concern for the Panel has been the removal of or reduction in Disability Parking spaces around public spaces and venues. As well as the importance of continued availability of parking for residents, visitors and deliveries, there is also the need for the City Centre to be more pedestrian friendly, to reduce bus delays due to congestion, to ensure efficient bus lanes, and to keep improving access to the city centre by public transport.

At the March presentation from Auckland Transport, Panel members were concerned that the draft Room to Move i te Pokapū Tāone, City Centre Parking Management Plan, is more concerned with keeping cars out of the city centre than with ensuring access for seniors and less mobile citizens. Little attention has been given to the need for pick-up and drop-off zones beside public spaces and places.

Scooters In a topic that straddles transport and safety, the June 2025 report from the Principal Transport Planner also included the Panel-requested data on e-scooter related accidents in Auckland. Table 4 from that report is included here.

Table 4: The number of new ACC claims for injuries relating to ‘E-Scooters’ in the Auckland region between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2024, All ages.

Year	New Claims
2020	520
2021	562
2022	712
2023	921
2024	1,171
Total	3,886

Panel members are concerned that, unlike most other cities globally, Auckland Transport does not require e-scooter riders to be licensed or to wear a helmet, and e-scooters are restricted to the footpath. E-scooters are often seen with 2-up, or with small children tucked in front of the driver, travelling at speed. Unfortunately, no improvement has resulted from the Panel’s efforts.

Cross Panel Engagement

The Seniors Advisory Panel members have participated actively in Council sponsored workshops for all the Demographic panels, as well as the Co-Chairs meeting regularly. These are an important aspect of Panel activity. They help Panel members to understand each other's particularly challenging priorities and derive support for means of offering advice to Auckland Council, as well as combining our efforts on matters of common interest such as recognising the value of community knowledge in emergency management.

We note the huge value of cross-panel meetings for Co-Chairs, sharing issues, knowledge, understanding and achievements; informing and supporting each other. Such shared knowledge led to a cross-Panel letter to Mayor Brown 13/06/25 outlining our concerns regarding increasing poverty and hardship across Tamaki Makaurau Auckland.

Also, the cross-panel Māori group has provided courage, learning and support for members.

Two Seniors Advisory Panel members have joined representatives from each of the other Panels in contributing to the Elections Working Group, concerned with addressing the extremely low participation in local body elections. The success or otherwise of this initiative will be measurable after the election.



Recommended Seniors Advisory Panel Priorities for Next Term

Age Friendly Auckland Plan. The Panel wishes to continue its role as the kaitiaki for the Age Friendly Auckland Plan. With a growing and increasingly diverse seniors population and the increasingly challenging living conditions for this group, the plan has even greater weight in serving as the overarching lens for how well we are doing in our communities. We have identified the need to engage with greater depth with the measurable goals of the plan.

In addition, we would value a dedicated web page for Age Friendly Auckland Resources, including the Plan, Annual Reports and other relevant resources including research.

Social needs. A crisis is looming in both housing and health for increasing numbers of seniors. It is now vital that we acknowledge that poverty is impacting the wider community: home, health, clothing, school attendance, belonging (ref: Cross-Panel letter to the Mayor 13/06/25).

Where these matters can be ameliorated or resolved by Council engagement via community action, the Panel could provide comment and support. We have an ongoing interest in progressing dialogue around homelessness amongst seniors and the importance of appropriate emergency housing .

Bearing in mind the growth in numbers of seniors it is important that we begin to place dementia at the forefront of our considerations and advice to Auckland Council. The successful AFA film project over this last summer is an acknowledgement by Auckland Council of the importance of community initiatives to meet the needs of dementia sufferers and their whanau.

Accessibility in parks and public spaces. The Panel is interested in the supporting advice to make more of our public spaces, including parks, accessible. In difficult times it is even more important to ensure all parks, playgrounds and public spaces are enjoyable, accessible, easy to navigate, safe and well lit. The work done by Puketāpapa Local Board in 2018 on accessibility in parks and assessing the needs of diverse communities in parks are exemplar.

Rates relief communication. Ensure Local Councils' Rates Relief policies are well publicised. From 2025, the income abatement threshold to be eligible for the maximum Local Government rebate for SuperGold Cardholders and their

households is lifted from \$31,510 to \$45,000 (about the rate for a couple receiving NZ Super). The maximum rebate for the scheme will increase from \$790 to \$805. We note with gratitude the inclusion of Rates Relief information on the recent Auckland Council Rates Demand.

Digital Literacy This is another urgent matter of accessibility and safety. Seniors need to continue to have access to knowledge of digital developments to manage their finances and keep themselves safe from crime. The Panel will wish to continue to engage and advise on this priority.



Recommendations for Panel members:

Start Panel member recruitment earlier, and

- provide greater understanding to Panel members of how Auckland Council works, and
- provide more guidance on the role of Panel members.

Ensure overlap of new and experienced Panel members so acquired knowledge can be transferred.

Ensure Panel members receive feedback on their contribution and value to Auckland Council. Make deliberate efforts to recruit Māori and Pasifica members, and representatives from other growing ethnicity populations.

Public / community events by / with Panels can build general understanding of Auckland Council's roles and functions. Panel members and Auckland Council staff have made significant efforts in the approach to the 2025 local body elections to increase community knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Local Government. The outcome of this effort can be measured by any increase in voter turnout ([2022: 35.4% of registered electors](#)). This needs to be given adequate value as a public education and participation and good governance opportunity.

Finally, thanks to Auckland Council Support Staff for their guidance and friendship, and thanks to Auckland Council for the experience of serving on the Seniors Advisory Panel.

Nāku noa, nā

Auckland Council Seniors Advisory Panel



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Taiohi

Youth Advisory Panel

From Vision to Voice: Youth Advisory Panel's
Journey and Legacy.

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Purpose:

This paper details the work of the Youth Advisory Panel during the 2022-2025 Term.

Background & Context:

In 2023, we embarked on an exciting new chapter with the formation of the Auckland Council Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). We came together as a diverse group of young people, aged 14 to 24, each bringing their unique and insightful perspectives on what it means to grow up in our region.

Together, we collaboratively set out our vision for young people and identified the key priorities that matter most. The panel's varied experiences and viewpoints were invaluable in shaping these foundational goals, ensuring our strategies and plans are truly reflective of the community we aim to serve. This fresh start with a committed and passionate panel has laid a strong foundation for improving outcomes for young people in our region.

Members of the panel

Co-Chairs:

- Kritika Selach
- Sanat Singh

Panel Members:

- Ayla Johnstone
- Dylan Chand
- Esther O'Donnell (joined September 2023)
- Fine Aholelei
- Humaira Khan
- Jasmine Gray
- Katja Phutaraksa Neef
- Ryan Chow
- Taimarino Cleave (joined September 2023)

Note: two panel members resigned during the term; Vira Paky Co-Chaired until September 2024 when Kritika Selach was elected, and Julie Nicholson who joined in September 2023 until March 2025.

Supporting Staff:

- Co-Lead Officers – Alison Reid and Divya Raghubar
- Governance Advisors – Madeline Holland and Milly Athy-Timmins
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Shane Henderson
- Chief Liaison Councillor - Councillor Julie Fairey

Discussion - Work Programme Priorities and Highlights

YAP's Strategic Priorities for the Term:

- Connection and Belonging.
All youth in Tāmaki Makaurau have a pathway to meaning and belonging.
- A Resilient Auckland.
All youth in Tāmaki Makaurau can navigate our city with ease and contribute to future plans for our city.
- Thriving Young People.
All youth in Tāmaki Makaurau feel a sense of belonging in our city and that their voices matter.

Work Programme Highlights:

Youth Advisory Panel: Championing Civic Engagement in Local Elections

A central and recurring theme for the Youth Advisory Panel throughout their term has been Local Elections and Civic Engagement. The panel has been deeply committed to exploring and advocating for how young people can be more involved, engaged, and participate effectively in local democratic processes.

This commitment was significantly demonstrated through the Cross-Panel Local Elections Working Group, which benefited from the dedicated YAP representation of Esther O'Donnell and Co-Chairperson Kritika Selach. Their direct involvement ensured the unique perspectives of young people were integrated into broader discussions on electoral engagement.

Further solidifying their focus, the Panel hosted an in-house session during their April Workshop specifically on Youth Engagement for Local Elections. This dynamic session aimed to generate actionable insights for the Local Elections Team, prompting discussions around "What does dream engagement look like," identifying individual priorities for YAP members, and envisioning these ideas in action.

Key ideas emerged from these discussions, highlighting a desire for:

- **Increased youth participation in Auckland Council Consultation Periods:** This includes crucial processes like the Annual Budget and Long-Term Plan, with the aim of sparking civic engagement by raising awareness of existing mechanisms.
- **A clearer understanding of the youth's role in shaping policies:** Empowering young people to see the tangible impact of their contributions.
- **Tailored and Culturally Responsive Engagement:** Develop and implement engagement strategies that are specifically designed for immigrant, Māori, and Pasifika youth, recognizing their diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and community structures.
- **Tailored engagement for rural communities:** Recognizing the diverse needs and access points of young people across the region.
- **Provision of easy-to-read information, disseminated by young people:** Ensuring information is accessible and delivered in a relatable format by their peers.

Through these initiatives, the Youth Advisory Panel has powerfully advocated for a more inclusive and effective civic landscape, empowering young people to actively shape the future of their communities.



Endorsement of the Thriving Rangatahi Plan: A Youth-Led Initiative

A significant achievement for the Youth Advisory Panel in 2024 was their instrumental role in the development and endorsement of the new **Thriving Rangatahi Plan**, a comprehensive strategy designed to support children and young people (aged 14-24) across Tāmaki Makaurau.

The plan, which received formal approval from both the YAP and Auckland Council's Policy and Planning Committee on December 10, 2024, is the culmination of extensive engagement with over 400 rangatahi from diverse backgrounds. This ensures the plan genuinely reflects their aspirations and the challenges they face.

The Youth Advisory Panel, through its co-chairs Sanat Singh and Kritika Selach, strongly advocated for the plan's focus on equitable outcomes for all Auckland's rangatahi, emphasizing its role in fostering more representative, future-focused, and equitable decision-making. The plan's commitment to ensuring rangatahi have a voice in decisions directly impacting their lives was a key point of endorsement from the YAP.

The Thriving Rangatahi Plan identifies five critical focus areas, informed by young people's input:

- **Connection and belonging** – "We are safe to be ourselves"
- **Health and wellbeing** – "We are healthy and well"
- **Access to opportunities** – "The world is ours"
- **Civic participation** – "We have a voice"
- **Climate and environment** – "We are connected to Te Taiao".

This new plan replaced the previous "I Am Auckland" strategy and is strategically nested under "Ngā Hapori Momoho / Thriving Communities," Auckland Council's overarching community wellbeing strategy. This new approach underscores the understanding that healthy and thriving children and young people are fundamental to thriving communities. The Youth Advisory Panel's strong backing of this plan signified a crucial step towards embedding youth voices and priorities at the heart of council strategies.

Youth Voice in Auckland Emergency Management and Resilience

The Youth Advisory Panel actively contributed to Auckland Emergency Management's efforts to enhance youth engagement in emergency readiness and response. Following the Storm Recovery Cross-Panel Workshop on August 24, 2023, the Panel provided insight on storm recovery, resilience and Auckland Emergency Management.

Furthermore, the Panel participated in the Auckland Emergency Management Youth Digital Programme Workshop, offering valuable advice on opportunities for 16-24-year-olds to be involved in emergency activities. They identified best practices for sharing preparedness information with this age group and highlighted gaps or new avenues for more direct engagement, ensuring that youth voices are central to building a more resilient Auckland.

The Youth Advisory Panel believes emergency preparedness is vital because it empowers young people to be confident and active participants in their communities during crises, rather than just vulnerable recipients of aid. Furthermore, engaging youth in emergency planning ensures that preparedness strategies are relevant and effectively communicated to a demographic that often faces unique challenges during disasters.

Youth Voice Through Digital Platforms: Buzzy Consultation

The Youth Advisory Panel played an integral role in the developmental phases of Buzzy, Auckland Council's new digital platform designed to amplify youth voices. The concept of Buzzy resonated strongly with YAP members, aligning directly with their strategic priorities of ensuring young people are connected and that their perspectives are actively heard across the region.

The Panel's involvement in these discussions was crucial in shaping a platform that truly serves as a core engagement tool for young people, fostering greater participation and direct communication with Auckland Council.

Transport Consultations for Auckland

Transport has consistently been a topic of significant interest and discussion for the Youth Advisory Panel throughout their term, directly aligning with their priority of "A resilient Auckland: All youth in Tāmaki Makaurau can navigate our city with ease and contribute to future plans for our city." The YAP provided valuable insights into transport strategies through two key engagements:

In August 2023, the Panel contributed to the Auckland Transport draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP). They provided crucial feedback on Auckland Transport's key proposals for public transport, identifying their top three desired changes or improvements, the top three aspects of the draft plan they liked, and other general feedback on public transport. This input ensured that youth perspectives on accessibility and efficiency were integrated into the plan's development.

Later, in November 2024, the YAP received an update from Auckland Transport regarding Public Transport Safety. During this session, the Panel was briefed on the initiatives Auckland Transport was undertaking to address safety concerns across the public transport network, allowing them to understand current efforts and continue advocating for safer transit options for young people.



Transport continues to be a key area of interest for the Youth Advisory Panel, who remain committed to ensuring that future transport solutions are not only efficient and accessible but also genuinely responsive to the needs and aspirations of Auckland's young people. Their ongoing engagement underscores their dedication to creating a more connected and resilient city for all.

Climate & Sustainability: A Core Strategic Theme

Climate and sustainability emerged as a paramount and deeply integrated theme for the Youth Advisory Panel throughout their term, reflecting the profound impact environmental issues have on the future of young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. Recognizing that climate action is not just an environmental imperative but also a matter of intergenerational equity and community resilience, the Panel actively engaged with initiatives aimed at fostering a sustainable and prepared Auckland.

A key aspect of this engagement involved direct exposure to and collaboration with two significant youth-led climate action programmes from the Education and Community Climate Action group. The Panel was presented with insights from Mātātahi Taiao, a powerful rangatahi Māori-led response to climate challenges, which underscored the importance of indigenous knowledge and culturally grounded approaches to environmental stewardship. Simultaneously, the Panel learned about the Rangatahi Environmental Action Leaders (REAL) programme, showcasing another vital stream of youth-driven climate initiatives. These presentations provided the YAP with a comprehensive understanding of diverse youth-led efforts, inspiring their advocacy and strategic thinking.

The significance of this theme was further solidified during the March 2024 Panel Workshop, where Dylan and Esther served as dedicated portfolio leads for Climate & Sustainability. Their leadership ensured that climate remained a core focus, driving discussions and recommendations.

Critically, the Panel also recognized the intrinsic link between climate action and Auckland Emergency Management, understanding that building resilience against the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events, is fundamental to the safety and well-being of young Aucklanders. This holistic approach highlights the YAP's commitment to addressing climate change through both proactive environmental initiatives and robust emergency preparedness, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for the region.

Engaging with the City Centre Student Experience Draft Action Plan

The Youth Advisory Panel participated in a crucial discussion regarding the City Centre Student Experience Draft Action Plan on an Extraordinary June 2025 Meeting. This plan, developed in partnership with universities, the Auckland Council group, and business associations, aims to support, empower, and add value to Auckland's significant tertiary student population, which numbers over 50,000 in the city centre.

This initiative is of particular importance to the YAP because it directly addresses the well-being and engagement of a large segment of young people in Auckland. The draft action plan's objectives to foster student participation in city life, acknowledge their achievements, improve safety and accessibility, and enhance the city centre's desirability as a place for students align closely with the YAP's broader mandate to improve outcomes for young people.

The Panel's input during this discussion was vital as it provided a direct youth voice on proposed initiatives, identified potential gaps, prioritised actions, and suggested further engagement opportunities to ensure the plan truly reflects the aspirations and needs of tertiary students. Through their insight to this plan, YAP actively participates in shaping a more inclusive and supportive urban environment for young people pursuing their education and living in Auckland's city centre.

YAP Insight - Review for Youth Voice Groups Project in Auckland

The Youth Advisory Panel Members provided insight into the planning of the independent review for the Youth Voice Groups Project for Auckland. This was important to various panel members as they came into the advisory space through the Youth Council Spaces. The discussion questions entailed their inspirations of involvement, strengths and impacts of the youth voice group space and lastly challenges and gaps on how they are supported and advice to council, local boards and host organisations on making Youth Voice Groups even more meaningful and impactful.

Co-Chairperson Insight: Royal Commission Review into COVID-19

The Youth Advisory Panel's leadership extended to providing crucial youth perspectives on the national response to the pandemic, with Co-Chairpersons participating in the Royal Commission's Review into COVID-19 – The Lessons Learned from COVID-19.

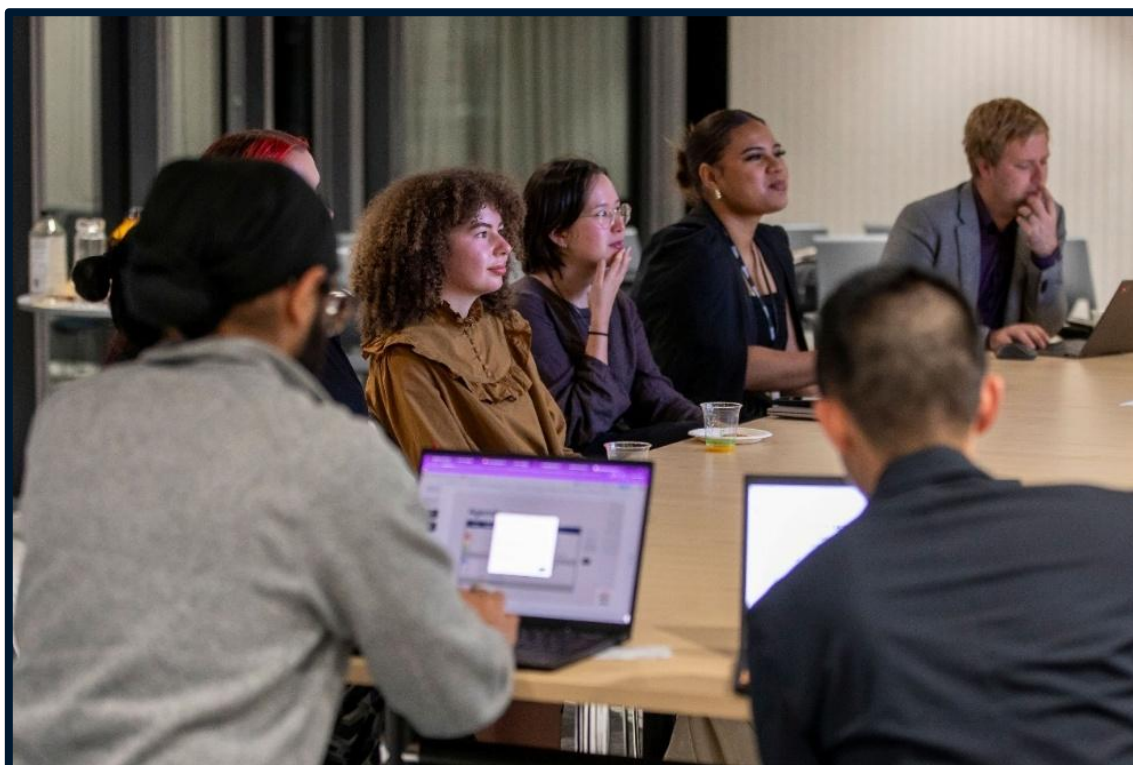
Co-Chairperson Kritika Selach offered a direct and personal account of her experiences navigating the final two years of high school (NCEA Levels 2 and 3) through various lockdowns and subsequently commencing her university degree amidst the restrictions. Her insights highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic starkly exemplified existing educational inequalities, underscoring the disproportionate impact on certain young people.

Furthermore, Kritika's reflection shed light on the additional responsibilities faced by young people in leadership roles, who often found themselves stepping up to support their peers during an unprecedented and challenging period. This direct engagement ensured that the unique realities and challenges faced by young New Zealanders during the pandemic were formally documented and considered in the national review.

YAP Led Initiative - Youth Entrepreneurship Workshop

The Youth Advisory Panel's Led Initiative for this Term was focused on Entrepreneurship. This was facilitated by YAP Member, Ryan Chow and Co-Chair Sanat Singh.

This Youth Entrepreneurship Workshop was motivated through the idea of understanding the uniqueness of Youth Entrepreneurship and the pathway it can build to grow individuals, helping them grow their potential and the positive impact on communities, society and the economy. This in-house workshop facilitated by Ryan and Sanat focused on unlocking members' understanding of youth entrepreneurship, the Kings Trust NZ's offerings to support youth in entrepreneurship and thought provoking discussions on entrepreneurship. The members came together and discussed the barriers to youth entrepreneurship, how young people can be better supported in this journey and how it connects to leadership.



Experiences - What Went Well and Recommendations

What Went Well: The Strengths of Our Experiences

- **Effective Leadership and Teamwork:** We saw great leadership from our co-chairs throughout the term. A prime example was how our Co-Chair, Sanat, took the lead in curating our responses and presentations for the wider Advisory Panel's reporting as well, which was a real point of pride for the Youth Advisory Panel. This built a strong sense of community where everyone worked well together and treated each other with respect.
- **Adaptable Communication and Engagement:** Our group chat was a game-changer, helping us stay connected outside of official meetings. We also found that having evening meetings was a huge help, as it reduced barriers and made it easier for everyone to engage, especially given our diverse timetables and commitments as young people.
- **High-Quality Contributions and Impact:** The quality of our feedback to the council was consistently high. We always made sure our advice was grounded in real-world experiences, people, and communities. It was intimidating at first, but the council's welcoming reception made us feel that our voices were truly valued. We were even able to provide valuable insights for shaping the city's future.
- **Learning and Growth Opportunities:** Being on the YAP was a great learning experience. We developed a strong "learning ecosystem," gaining a lot of insight into the council's processes, decisions, and overall work. Members were also able to actively contribute to topics they were personally interested in.
- **Cross-Panel Collaboration:** It was incredibly beneficial to engage in cross-panel activities. We had the chance to give feedback directly to the Governing Body and learn about key issues from different perspectives, like those from the Seniors Panel. It was interesting to see the different takes on the same issues and to use that input to form our own suggestions.
- **Support and Resources:** We were grateful for our council support staff who were instrumental in getting us the information we needed. Having access to the Auckland Council building was also a fantastic way for us to interact with the organization. Additionally, the Nexus platform was a useful tool for reviewing meeting materials, and the provided refreshments were a much-appreciated touch.

Our Recommendations for Areas for Improvement

- **Diverse Representation:** For Auckland to truly be an "international city," the YAP needs broader representation. We should look to include more Māori and Pasifika members, as well as international students and people for whom English is not their first language. Recruitment should also actively seek out young people who aren't already engaged in these processes, not just those who are.
- **Expanding Our Reach and Influence:** We need more opportunities for cross-council collaboration, specifically with key Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) like Tataki Auckland. These CCOs are vital to the city's development, and building a relationship with them would be beneficial for both YAP's priorities and future opportunities. We should also explore opportunities to meet with other youth advisory bodies.
- **Improving the Panel Experience:** The recruitment process is currently too long, which means we lose valuable time getting into a productive rhythm. More frequent meetings could help us build relationships faster. We should also have more opportunities to get out of the Auckland House/Town Hall. Field trips, to learn about different council organisations, or holding meetings in different communities, would be a greater way to better connect with the city.
- **Strengthening Our Role and Impact:** As a panel, we should have the ability to pass formal resolutions. This would give our shared ideas and thoughts more momentum and weight. It's also critical to close the feedback loop, so we know what happens to our advice.
- **Building a Better Relationship with the Governing Body:** We need a stronger relationship with the Governing Body. While it's great for us to present to them, it should be a two-way street. We could create a rotating roster where members of the Governing Body are mandated to attend different panel meetings to hear directly from us.
- **Enhancing Support and Leadership:** We should offer better support for different leadership styles, including for neurodiverse individuals. This could involve training on public speaking and navigating meetings. We also recommend having older YAP members join the recruitment panel.
- **New Areas for Discussion:** The panel could focus on key topics like youth entrepreneurship and international student welfare in the future.

Reflections & Recommendations

In this section, hear from some of our Panel Members in regard to their reflection and recommendation for the next Panel Term.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
Sanat Singh (Co-Chair)	I have been in and out of local government spaces for a long time, first in my time at the Puketapapa Youth Foundation, then at Auckland Youth Voice and now as the co-chair for the Youth Advisory Panel. One thing that has been made very clear to me, is that when you have a group of young people in a room together and give them the power and responsibility to shape that space to achieve what they see fit, they can accomplish some really fantastic things. Throughout our time we have been laser focused on bringing in our diverse lived experience to inform more equitable and representative decision making from within Auckland Council. We have conversations ranging from Civic Engagement, to Public Transport to Auckland Council's new Rangatahi Strategy for the next 10 years. My aspiration and advice for the next panel is to make sure they own the mandate they have been given and take up as much space as possible (unashamedly), because they'll be surprised just how much people want to hear what they have to say.
Kritika Selach (Co-Chair)	Being part of the Auckland Council Youth Advisory Panel has been an instrumental part of my journey in youth voice, leadership and the advisory environment. The learnings have been extremely valuable and I am so grateful to have worked alongside and co-chaired an insightful group of Panel Members with diverse backgrounds. My recommendation for the incoming panel is to really delve deep in, be courageous, ask some great questions and carry on the momentum of what we achieved keeping the young Aucklanders you are representing at the back of mind.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
Fine Aholelei (Panel Member)	Ko e 'Eiki pē tene lava As my term on the Auckland Council Youth Advisory Panel nears its end, I reflect on the absolute privilege it was to work alongside and learn from some of Auckland's most driven, community minded, and passionate young people. Being in this space as a Pacific person from Glen Innes meant more than merely a seat, but meant a chance to advocate for my fellow Pasifika youth who call Auckland home - accounting for their experiences, their communities, and their value in Tāmaki Makaurau. As we pass on the baton, I just have a few recommendations to the next panel of trailblazers. Your lived experiences, your communities, and your stories are what we need at the centre of this work. If anything, this space welcomes your authentic self and encourages you to make it one which reflects you, your identity, and your villages. Mālo ho'o ngaue lelei, my fellow peers who have helped me grow as an individual simply by their inspiring presence and driving passion to serve their communities. Mālo 'aupito, Auckland Council for implementing such measures in efforts to ensure more equitable outcomes and an enhanced quality of livelihood for our young Aucklanders.
Esther O'Donnell (Panel Member)	My time on the Youth Advisory Panel has been extremely rewarding and eye-opening. It has definitely driven me to become more involved with issues that matter to me and to use my voice for the causes I believe in, especially now that I know more about the mechanisms to create change. I've especially enjoyed the relationships I've been able to develop with my fellow Panel members and the support of Auckland Council staff, and how driven everyone is to make Tāmaki Makaurau an incredible place to be a young person, and have no doubt that this will continue into the future.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
	My advice to the next cohort of Panellists is to bring your whole selves to the panel meetings, and to lean into the lived experience of yourselves and the communities that you represent.



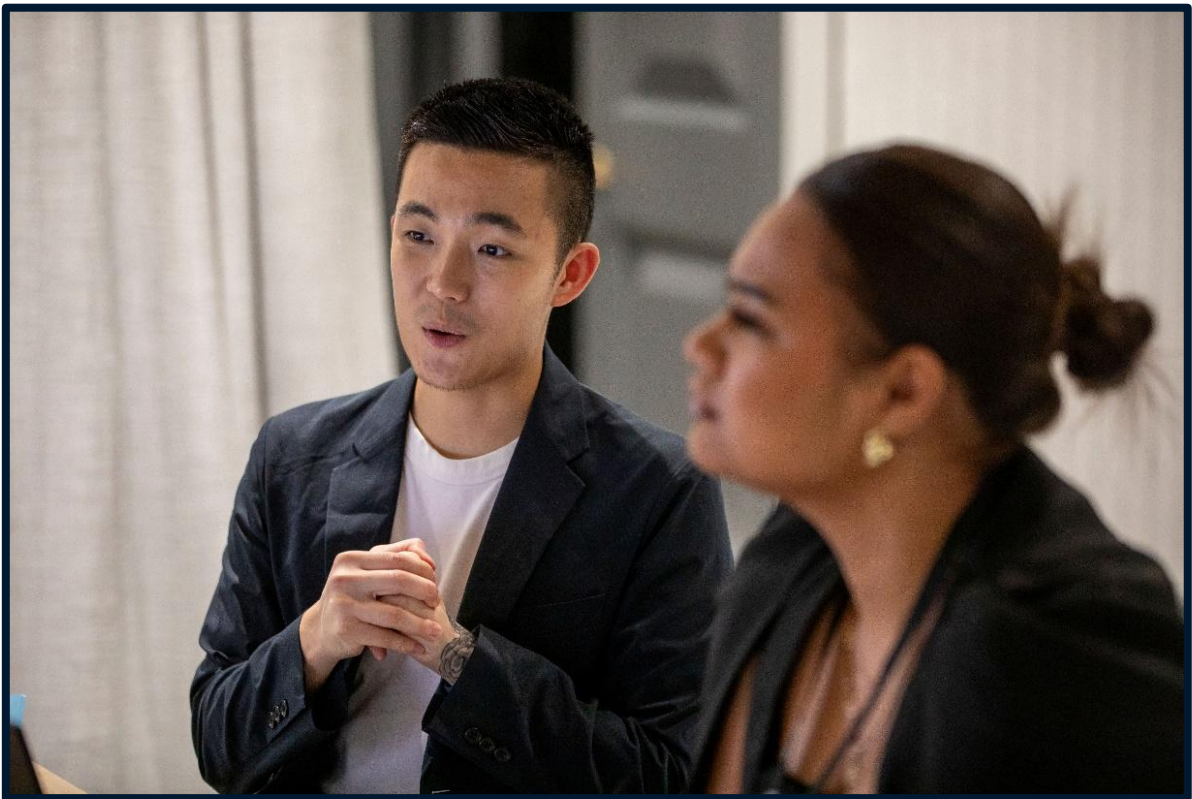
Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
Ryan Chow (Panel Member)	Being part of the Youth Advisory Panel has been a valuable and insightful experience. I've appreciated the opportunity to contribute to initiatives that support young people across Tāmaki Makaurau and to learn from the perspectives of other passionate members. At the same time, I would like to reflect on the formulation of the Panel itself. While we had a diverse group in many respects, I felt that the majority of voices came from those with deep-rooted local experience. As someone who came to Auckland more recently, I often felt that the perspectives of foreign-born or international youth - those who may be newer to the city or navigating it as students or recent arrivals - were underrepresented. Auckland is increasingly international in nature, and many young people here are experiencing the city through a different lens: one shaped by cultural adjustment, limited social networks, or a need to quickly make sense of complex systems in education, housing, and transport. Ensuring that these experiences are actively heard and reflected is essential to making Auckland a city that genuinely supports all youth. I encourage future Panels and Council to consider more intentional inclusion of young people who are newer to Aotearoa, so that civic advice and youth policy can fully reflect the diverse lived realities of all who call Tāmaki Makaurau home. Looking ahead, I believe there is significant opportunity for the Youth Advisory Panel to deepen its impact through greater collaboration with external youth-focused entities operating in Tāmaki Makaurau. A number of organisations - both local and international - are already doing meaningful work to uplift young people, and stronger strategic alignment with them could enhance the reach and relevance of the Panel's initiatives.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
	One example is the US Embassy Youth Council, which offers a platform for young leaders in New Zealand to engage with peers across Aotearoa and the United States on topics ranging from civic participation to indigenous rights and international cooperation. Their work in building cross-cultural dialogue and empowering emerging leaders complements the Panel's kaupapa, and I believe there is room for closer partnership through joint events, forums, or knowledge exchanges. Beyond that, collaborating with groups that serve refugee youth, international students, and migrant communities could allow the Panel to better reflect the lived experiences of Auckland's increasingly diverse youth population. These connections could bring fresh insight into the challenges and aspirations of underrepresented young people—particularly those navigating identity, opportunity, and belonging in a global city. As the next panel is formed, I would strongly encourage a more intentional effort to reach out to these kinds of external networks. Doing so would not only broaden the perspectives represented at the table but also build stronger bridges between Auckland Council and the wider ecosystem of youth leadership already thriving across the city. To strengthen outcomes for youth entrepreneurship in Tāmaki Makaurau, the Panel encourages deeper collaboration between the Youth Advisory Panel and other Auckland Council-controlled organisations - particularly Tātaki Auckland Unlimited. As Auckland's economic and cultural development agency, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited is uniquely positioned to provide structural support to emerging entrepreneurs through: • Access to business development networks and industry clusters. • Connections to local and international investment pathways.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
	• Support for creative industries and digital innovation initiatives. • Major event platforms and marketing infrastructure. Youth entrepreneurs, especially those from underserved communities, often face barriers to accessing such opportunities. A coordinated effort between the Panel and Tātaki Auckland Unlimited could help bridge this gap by: • Co-developing youth entrepreneurship programming that sits within Tātaki's innovation and business support workstreams. • Establishing a youth stream or scholarship pathway into flagship initiatives such as GridAKL, the Auckland Innovation Precinct, or tourism and event initiatives. • Facilitating access to council-led campaigns, export readiness programmes, or creative industry funding for youth-led start-ups. • Inviting youth representatives to participate in roundtables or working groups alongside industry and government partners. This collaborative model would not only ensure intergenerational representation in economic strategy but would also embed youth voice in the heart of Auckland's growth agenda. I would also encourage Auckland Council to consider revisiting the current structure of the Youth Advisory Panel and its engagement model to allow for greater flexibility, autonomy, and responsiveness to emerging issues and interests among young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. While the existing meeting schedule and agenda-setting processes provide a valuable foundation, there is a growing need for the Panel to be empowered to self-organise discussions, projects, or events around topical issues and thematic areas, including - but not limited to -

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
	entrepreneurship, sport, international student wellbeing, climate action, and mental health. To support this, Auckland Council could explore: • Establishing a framework or set of flexible guidelines enabling Panel members to initiate issue-specific working groups, roundtables, or community engagements outside of the formal quarterly meetings. • Allocating a modest, discretionary budget to the Panel to support small-scale youth-led initiatives or convenings, such as pop-up events, collaborative workshops, or peer-led campaigns. • Supporting the development of a Panel-hosted calendar of engagements, allowing members to champion particular themes or communities in a way that reflects their lived experience and interests. This approach would help to unlock the full potential of the Panel - not only as a consultative body, but as an active, youth-led platform for civic leadership and community-building. It would also recognise the diverse interests and strengths of each panel member, and better reflect Auckland's dynamic and international youth population.
Ayla Johnstone (Panel Member)	My time on the Youth Advisory Panel has been both beautiful and deeply insightful. I've had the privilege of meeting so many incredible people, both fellow panel members and those within Auckland Council. What stood out most to me was that our feedback was genuinely heard and taken seriously. One of the absolute highlights of my experience was working with the Thriving Rangatahi group. Regularly engaging with them filled me with hope and optimism for the future. I also really valued the chance to learn about and provide input on topics that aren't typically associated with youth voices, such as public transport safety and sustainable urban planning.

Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
	Collaborating with other advisory panels, particularly the Senior Advisory Panel, was a real highlight. It was heartening to build intergenerational connections and shared understanding. I'm especially proud to have been a voice for rural rangatahi. With the support of Councillor Shane Henderson and dedicated council staff, I truly believe that geographically disenfranchised youth are receiving more attention and consideration than ever before. Looking ahead, I would encourage the next panel to spend more time clarifying their priorities early on. At times, our focus felt scattered, and I believe more structure could help strengthen the impact of their work.



Name:	Reflection & Recommendation
Katja Neef (Panel Member)	Being part of the Youth Advisory Panel has been incredibly insightful to fully understand how as young people we can use our voice to see tangible changes and to be heard. It has been rewarding to work alongside powerful young people who bring such diverse backgrounds, and lived experience to the space and are able to represent their communities to shape decisions and strategies that impact our city. My recommendation for the next incoming panel is to ensure that as panel members we bring our communities to the table which is invaluable.
Taimarino Cleave (Panel Member)	Being part of the Youth Advisory Panel has shaped my perspective on the possibilities of youth involvement in Auckland City. There's a growing demand for youth-centric recommendations, as young people drive cities forward and having a small part in that has been incredibly rewarding. Through the panel, I've met incredibly talented individuals who are pioneers in their respective fields My recommendations for the oncoming panel would be to seize every opportunity. There's a wide range of initiatives led by talented individuals, so dive in and try something new.
Humaira Khan (Panel Member)	Being part of the Youth Advisory Panel was a fun, interesting, and thought-provoking experience. I had the opportunity to meet new people, build meaningful connections, and participate in engaging workshops. I'm truly grateful for this opportunity and would like to thank the Council for making it possible. The co-chairs, lead officers, and everyone involved were incredibly kind and supportive, which made the experience even more enjoyable. To the next panel members: make the most of this opportunity, get involved and enjoy every moment. It goes by really fast.





Te Rōpū Tohutohu mō te Pokapū o te Tāone

City Centre Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Purpose

The purpose of this end-of-term report is to reflect on the contributions of the City Centre Advisory Panel over the 2022–2025 term, highlight key achievements and areas of focus, and provide advice and considerations for the future.

The report summarises the Panel’s priorities, progress made, and the challenges and opportunities that remain. It is intended to inform the Elected Members, Council group, and partners of the Panel’s collective perspective, and to guide future decision-making to ensure the city centre continues to thrive as the economic, cultural, and social heart of Auckland and Aotearoa.

Members of the panel

Chairs:

- Independent Chair, Scott Pritchard
- Deputy Chair, Patrick Reynolds Transport sector

Panel Members:

- Adam Parkinson Residents' association (City Centre Residents Group)
- Alec Tang Sustainability and climate change
- Amy Malcolm Tertiary education sector (Auckland University of Technology)
- Ann-Marie Searchfield Social Sector (Lifewise)
- Antony Phillips Residents' association (City Centre Residents Group)
- Bernie Haldane Arts, culture and events (Auckland Arts Festival)
- Debbie Summers Tourism and travel sector (ID Tours)
- Dr Natalie Allen Urban design sector
- Genevieve Sage Waitematā Local Board Chair, Auckland Council
- George Crawford Property sector (Property Council of NZ)
- Grant Kemble Mana whenua (Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei representative)
- Helen Robinson Social sector (Auckland City Mission)
- Jamey Holloway Business associations (Karanga-a-hape Road Business Association)
- Kiri Coughlan Tertiary education sector (University of Auckland)
- Neville Findlay Retail sector representative
- Viv Beck Business associations (Heart of the City)
- Mayor Wayne Brown Auckland Council
- Councillor Mike Lee Auckland Council

Support Staff:

- Lead Officer – Simon Oddie Priority Location Director – City Centre Lead Agency, Auckland Urban Development Office

- Natalie Hansby – Manager, City Centre Experience, Auckland Urban Development Office
- Senior Governance and Relationship Advisor – Tam White
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey.

Introduction

The City Centre Advisory Panel brings together representatives from across central Tāmaki Makaurau – spanning business, retail, residential, local board, tertiary, design, climate, arts and culture, tourism, social sectors, and tangata whenua interests. Collectively, we provide both lived experience and professional expertise, grounded in deep connections across Auckland and Aotearoa.

As a panel, we are united in our commitment to Auckland’s success. A thriving region depends on a strong and vibrant city centre – the beating heart of our city and the nation’s hub for employment, education, transport, tourism, and cultural identity. At just 4.5 square kilometres, the city centre generates 8% of New Zealand’s GDP and serves as a major destination for workers, residents, and visitors alike. Its success is inseparable from the prosperity and liveability of the wider region.

Because of this, we believe the city centre must remain a strategic priority for the Council group. The City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) provides a clear and enduring vision for its future. The Panel reiterates its strong support for the CCMP’s outcomes and calls on the Council to reflect these more explicitly in the Annual Plan and future investment decisions.

Panel Work Programme

During this term, the Panel identified six key focus areas to guide our work programme:

1. **Community and Visitor Safety** – Build on progress to ensure people feel safe and supported, with perceptions matching on-the-ground improvements.
2. **Enhancing Vibrancy and Experience** – Support initiatives that attract people (residents, visitors, workers, and students) and create an attractive, high-quality urban environment.
3. **Growing a Thriving Residential Population** – Enable strong residential growth targets, with the infrastructure needed to make city centre living inclusive and desirable.
4. **Positioning as a Premier Learning and Innovation Hub** – Unlock the city centre’s potential as the national centre for education, research, and innovation.
5. **Maximising the Value of Integrated Transport Networks** – Improve access and connectivity, especially as we prepare for the opening of the City Rail Link.
6. **Increasing Climate Resilience** – Advance adaptation and emissions-reduction measures in line with *Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri*.

The Panel has made solid progress across all six areas, with some requiring greater attention in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. The panel believes that collectively these priorities remain the right balance for shaping a thriving city centre. As the city evolves, we recommend that the Council group continues to invest with flexibility – focusing effort where it is most needed while holding fast to this holistic mix of priorities.

Community and Visitor Safety

Community and visitor safety has been a top priority for the Panel throughout this term. The Panel recognises that for the city centre to thrive, all people must feel safe and supported when they work, live, study, or visit here. The Panel has consistently advocated for greater investment not only in traditional safety and security measures, but also in initiatives that promote wellbeing and inclusion – particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

Key successes this term:

- City Centre Safety Plan – Council taking a stronger role in facilitating a coordinated, integrated response to safety in the central city.
- Increased police presence – the Panel has been a strong advocate for greater visibility and reassurance policing.
- Expansion of the council-led safety wardens programme (formerly City Watch) to enhance the on-street presence with greater coverage across the city centre and proactive bylaws enforcement.
- Expanded homelessness outreach by Auckland City Mission, to improve health and housing outcomes for street whanau, rough sleepers and the housing insecure.
- Expansion of the Street Guardians programme by Auckland City Mission, as a meaningful alternative to street begging.
- Improved integration of CCTV monitoring to support timely responses to incidents.
- Pilot of a late-night safe zone on Friday and Saturday nights for people who need help or support on a night out.

These combined initiatives, supported in a large part through the City Centre Targeted Rate (CCTR), have contributed to a marked decrease in reported crime across the city centre. This progress is encouraging and has had a positive impact on both perceptions of safety and lived experience.

However, the Panel notes that the use of the CCTR to fund safety initiatives was not the original intent of the targeted rate. While this flexible investment has been critical to recent improvements, we strongly urge Council to establish sustainable, long-term funding mechanisms for safety and wellbeing programmes. The future of these essential services cannot be left dependent on a rate designed for city centre transformation.

The Panel also stresses that this progress must not lead to complacency. Continued focus is required, especially in responding to the sharp increase in homelessness. Between September 2024 and May 2025, Auckland has seen a 90 percent rise in people sleeping rough – many of whom are in the city centre. It is not acceptable that those in greatest need remain without housing or adequate support. Urgent and coordinated action is required to ensure homelessness in the city centre becomes rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Enhancing Vibrancy and Experience

The Panel recognises the critical role that events, arts, culture, and destination management (including cruise) play in shaping the city centre's identity and success. International experience clearly demonstrates that investing in cultural programming and entertainment gives people more reasons to visit more often. A vibrant city centre draws residents, workers, students, and visitors alike, and the resulting intensity of activity is a competitive advantage unique to urban centres.

For this reason, the Panel has consistently regarded investment in events and destination management as non-negotiable. These activities generate proven economic, cultural, and social benefits, directly supporting Auckland's vibrancy, appeal, and competitiveness. Conversely, reductions in funding are not cost savings - they are economic losses that weaken both the Auckland and national economies.

A sustainable funding mechanism needs to be secured to strengthen Auckland's long-term position. Recognising the proven value of investment in events and destination management, the Panel has taken a proactive stance by:

- **Endorsing additional CCTR allocations** towards attraction and activation activities through the FY25 Annual Plan.
- **Supporting a significant uplift in FY26 and FY27 CCTR investment** to attract people and deliver compelling experiences, strategically timed to coincide with the opening of the City Rail Link and the New Zealand International Convention Centre in 2026.

The additional investment over the Panel's term has enabled:

- Attraction of major events and performances – including Dua Lipa, the Live Nation Winter Series, The Others Way, Six the Musical, The Lord of the Rings musical, and the Auckland Live Cabaret Series.
- Securing conventions and business events – such as Auckland Startup Week.
- Development of strategic initiatives – including the City Centre Investment Prospectus, the Auckland by Night Action Plan, and the Student Experience Partnership Plan.
- Enhanced promotion and destination marketing – from cruise ship welcomes, expanded Christmas in the City Centre celebrations, and Heart of the City's visitor campaigns, through to the It's On in Auckland campaign by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited and Karangahape Road Business Association's 2025 winter campaign.

Looking ahead, the Panel strongly urges Council and central government to fast-track the introduction of sustainable funding solutions – such as a bed-night levy – to secure the long-term future of Auckland’s events and destination management programme. This is essential to safeguard the city centre’s vibrancy, resilience, and role as a driver of regional and national prosperity.

Growing a Thriving Residential Population

A thriving permanent residential population is essential to the health and success of the city centre. Residents bring life and vibrancy beyond standard retail and office hours, helping to create a city centre that is active on evenings and weekends, resilient in the face of economic shifts, and safer through passive surveillance. A strong and diverse residential base also fosters a deeper sense of community and belonging.

Unlocking the full potential of city centre living requires sustained investment in both hard infrastructure (such as housing, transport, and public spaces) and soft infrastructure (such as community facilities, services, and partnerships). Together, these enable the city centre to be seen not only as a place to work and visit, but also as a desirable and inclusive place to call home.

Key successes this term:

The Panel’s focus this term has been on understanding the current dynamics of city centre living and progressing a set of small but significant initiatives to lay the groundwork for future growth. This has included:

- Setting an ambition and vision for a thriving residential population of 100,000 in the city centre.
- Strengthening the evidence base on the value of residential growth, highlighting the economic, social, and environmental benefits of more people living centrally.
- Progressing a proposal for enhancing community partnerships and strengthening the residential voice in city centre decision-making.
- Dedicated CCTR funding to support and enable the next steps of this workstream.
- Providing regular updates on market trends and tools for growth, including property market dynamics, office-to-residential conversions, Plan Change 78, housing levers, and demographic profiles.

What's coming up:

- A pilot project to test and progress the findings of the community partnerships and residential voice workstream.
- Delivery of the City Centre Residents Survey 2026, providing fresh insights into resident needs and experiences.
- Specific place-based initiatives, including work in the Victoria Quarter.
- A refreshed City Centre Action Plan programme to strengthen support for residential communities, building on the groundwork laid this term.

While this term has been about testing, learning, and advancing smaller initiatives, the Panel sees the next term's focus as shifting to unlocking the full potential of the city centre as a thriving residential community. This will require activating the wider set of levers available. Growing a diverse, resilient residential population is one of the most powerful ways to ensure the long-term success of the city centre and must remain a core priority.

Positioning as a Premier Learning and Innovation Hub

The city centre is uniquely positioned to establish itself as a world-leading hub for learning and innovation, anchored by its two globally recognised universities. These institutions are not only major contributors to the local economy, but also vibrant drivers of talent, creativity, and cultural exchange. The Panel sees continued investment in this area as a major tailwind for the city centre, providing long-term momentum for Auckland's growth and global competitiveness.

Key successes this term:

- Student Experience Partnership Action Plan – advancing an implementation strategy to strengthen Auckland's reputation as a student-friendly city, with a particular focus on cultural and social connection.
- Targeted safety initiatives – improving student safety and wellbeing, especially at night, to ensure the city centre is welcoming and inclusive.
- Learning Quarter precinct planning – progressing a delivery plan that aligns significant university investment in their campuses with complementary public sector investment, improving access and connectivity to these critical city centre assets.

The next term must focus on how we leverage the role of the universities to strengthen the city centre's attractiveness as an innovation hub. This includes fostering deeper connections between education, research, business, and the wider community, and

positioning Auckland's city centre as a destination for talent, ideas, and entrepreneurship on the global stage.

Maximise Value of Integrated Transport Networks

The city centre is the pivotal node of Auckland's transport system. The efficiency of different modes, how well they connect, and how effectively they meet user needs all have a direct impact on the city centre's success. Integrated, co-ordinated networks that align with the land uses they serve – residential, commercial, cultural, and retail – are essential to a smoothly functioning city centre.

The Panel is broadly supportive of the intent behind the City Centre Bus Plan, Access for Everyone, and the City Centre Parking Plan. However, with the city centre not experiencing the same growth rates as the pre-2019 period, there must be confidence that proposed changes are fit for purpose in both the current and future context.

Positive steps forward include:

- Development and implementation of the City Centre Bus Plan.
- Development of short-term initiatives to address pick-up / drop-off, loading, and servicing needs in key parts of the city centre.
- Development of circulation plans to support the future network operating model when the City Rail Link opens and beyond.

The Panel's view is that greater consideration is needed on the timing and pace of change. With the current economic climate, lower foot traffic, and reduced spending, sequencing is critical. We need confidence that initiatives will deliver the intended benefits, and that changes are introduced at the right time and in the right way to support, rather than constrain, the city centre's recovery and long-term growth.

Increasing Climate Resilience

The city centre has a unique opportunity to lead the way in sustainable living, development, and transport. It plays a critical role in protecting and regenerating the natural environment and enhancing its mauri. A sustainable city centre with a healthy natural environment not only improves the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors, but also strengthens Auckland's appeal to investors, businesses, and future residents.

The Panel acknowledges that climate resilience has not received the level of focus originally intended this term, particularly in light of the lessons from the Auckland

Anniversary floods. However, the Panel sees strong benefit in the city centre establishing itself as a sustainable leader, with climate-resilient infrastructure at its core.

It has been encouraging to see progress on the Blue-Green Network implementation plan for the city centre. The plan's emphasis on stormwater management, urban ngahere expansion, biodiversity, and ecological health demonstrates the potential for the city centre to set itself apart from other urban centres. Embedding these approaches, as we have seen in projects such as Myers Park, Te Ha Noa and Daldy Street, will help position the city centre as both a place of resilience and regeneration, and a model for sustainable urban living across Aotearoa.

Review of the City Centre Targeted Rate

As part of its focus this term, the Panel requested staff to review the city centre targeted rate (CCTR) programme and develop a proposal for extending the rate. The review was prompted by the need to respond to both immediate challenges and emerging opportunities for the city centre, while ensuring long-term alignment with the place outcomes of the City Centre Masterplan.

The CCTR is currently confirmed until 2031. At its meeting on 18 August, the City Centre Advisory Panel endorsed a proposed six-year extension of the CCTR, from 2031 through to 2037, along with revised investment priorities for the portfolio programme.

A key feature of the refreshed programme is a significant shift towards initiatives that attract more people into the city centre. The intent is to stimulate economic activity by enhancing the city centre experience, encouraging visitation, and supporting the recovery of street-front businesses such as retail, hospitality, and entertainment.

The Panel emphasised the importance of resetting Aucklanders' relationship with the city centre and capitalising on upcoming milestones, including:

- Completion of major midtown public realm projects.
- The opening of the City Rail Link.
- The opening of the New Zealand International Convention Centre.

The Panel also acknowledged the significant disruption caused by construction, particularly from the City Rail Link, and stressed the need for investment that restores confidence and brings people back into the city centre.

To enable immediate progress, a focused programme of visitor-attraction initiatives will begin in FY2025/2026, funded through existing CCTR reserves.

The Panel notes that the decision on whether to extend the CCTR ultimately rests with the Governing Body, and that subject to Governing Body support, public feedback would be sought through either an Annual Plan or Long-term Plan consultation.

Considerations for the New Term

As the Panel concludes this term, a number of key themes have emerged that should guide the establishment and focus of the Panel in the next term. These reflect both lessons learned and opportunities to strengthen the Panel's impact going forward:

- **Diverse representation and voices** – Members emphasised the importance of drawing on a wide range of perspectives, including students and young people, Māori and Pasifika communities, and other under-represented groups. Diversity of views enriches the Panel's discussions and strengthens the legitimacy of its advice. At the same time, it is critical that the voices of those directly contributing to the targeted rate - including small businesses and ratepayers - are clearly heard. Striking the right balance between community diversity and ratepayer representation, while keeping the Panel at a manageable size, will be key to its effectiveness in the next term.
- **Stronger induction and support** – A more thorough induction process for new members is needed, covering the Panel's purpose, powers, and ways of working. A well-structured induction will help members get up to speed more quickly, ensuring they can contribute effectively and confidently from the outset.
- **Maintaining momentum** – Building on progress made this term is critical. The Panel needs to carry momentum on its key priorities through to next term, while also remaining agile and responsive to changing contexts and emerging challenges.
- **Focus on key themes** – The Panel identified several areas requiring continued and greater attention: transport networks, visitor attraction, investment attraction, and safety and wellbeing. Within safety and wellbeing, members emphasised the importance of not only improving security but also addressing wider social outcomes, working jointly with central government to respond to underlying issues. As part of investment attraction, opportunities in retail and technology were identified as particularly important to strengthen the city centre's competitiveness and long-term appeal.
- **Clear investment framework and economic development strategy** – The Panel stressed the need for a robust investment framework that demonstrates the full value of city centre initiatives. This should capture economic returns and benefits more holistically, grounded across all four wellbeings rather than financial outcomes alone. Alongside this, the Panel sees a clear need for a cohesive economic development strategy for the city centre, firmly nested within the wider regional and national context. Together, these tools would strengthen the case

for investment, ensure resources are directed to where they achieve the greatest impact, and position the city centre as a driver of Auckland's and New Zealand's economic success.

- **Strategic regeneration focus** – The Panel expressed interest in placing greater emphasis on big, strategic place-based regeneration programmes in the next term. Priority opportunities include the central wharves (and cruise infrastructure), Downtown West, Te Ara Tukutuku, the Aotea Arts Quarter, and Te Toangaroa. These transformational projects can redefine the city centre's role and attractiveness for residents, businesses, students and visitors alike.
- **Collaboration and perspectives** – The Panel values the ability to listen and learn from one another, recognising that diverse perspectives are an important strength.

Summary and Closing

This has been a term of both challenge and achievement for the City Centre Advisory Panel. The Panel has continued to provide strong, sector and experience-based advice and to advocate for the interests of the city centre and its communities. The endorsement of the CCTR extension, the progress on safety, vibrancy, residential growth, innovation, transport, and climate resilience, and the agility shown in response to shifting contexts all stand as significant achievements.

Looking forward, the focus must now shift to how Auckland unlocks the full potential of its city centre – as a thriving residential community, a premier hub for learning and innovation, and a compelling destination for workers, international and local visitors, and investors. This will require sustainable funding, stronger partnerships, and continued investment into experiences that bring people back.

The Panel reiterates its strong support for the City Centre Masterplan as the guiding vision. To succeed, Auckland must ensure the city centre remains a strategic priority - supported by the right tools, the right investment, and the right voices at the table.

As a final word, the Panel urges Council and central government to progress sustainable funding mechanisms, such as a bed-night levy, to secure the future vibrancy, resilience, and competitiveness of the city centre.

Yours sincerely



Scott Pritchard

Independent Chair CITY CENTRE ADVISORY PANEL



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take ā-Taiwhenua

Rural Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.



Key messages

The Rural Advisory Panel (panel) has been productive through its eleven meetings held throughout the 2022-25 electoral term. The panel received a wide range of updates on council group activities, including opportunities to discuss important considerations for the rural sector.

The panel were able to offer their insights to council staff and other panel members such that several initiatives were better informed. Panel members and council staff are supportive of a desire to workshop and further discuss out of cycle meeting opportunities to address topical issues as they arise. This outcome is consistent with the direction provided in reviewing how all panels should operate as articulated in a governing body report of 15 December 2022.

Some engagement between sector representatives and staff from council departments already occurs outside of the panel environment, but not specifically with the panel as often as desired. The desire to enable more collaborative panel discussions or workshops is pertinent given the nature and extent of central government reforms affecting the rural sector and council activities more generally.

Purpose

This report summarises the panel's activities over the 2022-25 electoral term and provide some reflections for future strategic focus and ways of working, should the Panel be re-constituted for the 2025-28 electoral term.

Members of the panel

The membership of the Panel during the 2022-25 electoral term included a mix of sector representatives (~14) and some elected members (5) representing the Rodney and Franklin wards and three local boards (Rodney, Waitakere Ranges, Franklin), as follows:

Chairs:

- Chair, Councillor Andy Baker Auckland Council
- Deputy Chair, Alan Cole Franklin Local Board, Auckland Council

Panel Members:

- Andrew McKenzie Beef and Lamb New Zealand
- Annaliese Morgan Young Farmers
- Brian Mason Landowners and Contractors Association (Wellsford)
- Councillor Greg Sayers Auckland Council
- Cushla Smith Fonterra Shareholders Council (from November 2023)
- Geoff Smith Equine Industry
- Glenn Wilcox Māori representative
- Greg McCracken Fonterra Shareholders Council (until September 2023)
- Jesse Brennan Federated Farmers of NZ
- Keith Vallabh Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association
- Leanne Roberts Horticulture NZ
- Linda Potauaine Waitakere Ranges Local Board, Auckland Council
- Mike Bramley Dairy New Zealand
- Philip Elworthy NZ Forest Owners Association
- Steve Levet Rural Contractors New Zealand
- Tim Holdgate Rodney Local Board
- Trish Fordyce National Forest Growers Levy Trust
- Wayne Scott Aggregate and Quarry Association

Support Staff:

The Panel was served by the following staff, with a smooth transition between support staff in the latter part of the electoral term:

- Lead Officers – Warren McLennan (until February 2025) and Dave Allen (from July 2025)
- Deputy Lead Officer (new role) – Andrew Bird (from July 2025)
- Governance Advisors – Phoebe Chiquet-Kaan and Lexy Turner
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey.

Background and context

The panel provides a mechanism for engagement with the rural sector across the Auckland region. Approximately 80% of the region has rural qualities, and about 6% of the region's population live and work in the rural area. The Panel can provide advice to the council within the remit of the following topics:

- council policies, plans and strategies relevant to rural issues
- regional and strategic matters relevant to rural interests
- any matter of particular interest or concern to rural communities.

The intent is that the Panel's advice will contribute to improving the outcomes of the rural sector as set out in the Auckland Plan and subsidiary plans, strategies and policies. The panel will provide advice through its agreed work programme, as set out at the start of the electoral term. In April 2023, the Panel met for the first time in the electoral term to consider and agree to the work programme, based on member responses during March 2023 to the Lead Officer's request to help form the work programme. Key elements of the work programme included:

- Central government's Essential Freshwater reform – updates on reform and implementation including compliance monitoring approach for new provisions
- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management – council implementation updates from planning perspective
- Rural flooding and drainage, and waterway clearing or planning
- Highly Productive Land and food security, in light of climate change
- Quarries – planning, overlays and offsets, and transport routes
- Rural Road Maintenance and improvement programme
- Engagement between rural interest groups and senior council staff.

Discussion

Work programme priorities and achievements

A summary table of the presentations and topics provided to the panel is set out in [Appendix 1](#). This table was socialised with the panel members on 1 August 2025. The work programme and associated presentations were quite extensive and covered a wide range of council activities with a bearing on the rural sector. The panel appreciated the information provided as a basis for discussing their activities over the electoral term.

Based on observations made by panel members during the term, or at their 1 August 2025 meeting, the following items were of particular interest:

- Unsealed Road Improvement Programme (Auckland Transport), and enhancements to methodology for assessing environmental benefits to adjacent receiving environments (an initiative through Auckland Council's Strategic Approach to Sediment).
- 'Essential Freshwater' updates – overviewing central government reform programme for changes to key regulatory instruments (National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-F), Stock Exclusion regulations, Farm planning regulations, Water take measurement regulations).
- Auckland Council's compliance monitoring activities in response to new Essential Freshwater regulatory instruments (e.g. NES-F, Stock Exclusion).
- Input into the Southern Rural Strategy following the council's adoption of the refreshed Future Development Strategy (being a component of the Auckland Plan 2050).
- NPS-FM implementation programme – preparatory work undertaken by Auckland Council for a plan change, including overviewing issues and potential options to address identified freshwater issues.
- Council group operational work programmes to:
 - improve resilience and community access to services and property following adverse weather events (e.g. Cyclone Gabrielle, February 2023)
 - highlight drainage issues alongside roading networks or areas of inundation and erosion following flood events

- facilitate improved land management outcomes through planting and erosion control initiatives.

Experience or areas for consideration to improve

At the 1 August 2025 panel meeting, members were asked to contribute any observations on how the panel had fulfilled its role, and what recommendations they would make for the future, should the panel be reconstituted in the next electoral term. Written observations were provided from some members, in addition to verbal observations made at the panel meeting by other members.

Panel members made the following observations about the value of the panel:

- Appreciate the work undertaken by the staff and councillors to update, upskill and educate our key stakeholders on council workstreams, challenges and opportunities.
- Provides a knowledgeable and useful forum for discussion and information sharing, where the current diversity of panel members and representatives from different rural activities is one of the panel's significant strengths.
- Support the continuation of the panel for the next electoral term, particularly given the significant policy changes anticipated over the coming years (e.g. freshwater, resource management reform, and review of the Auckland Unitary Plan).
- Articulating matters of importance to the rural sector helps with balancing perspectives associated with the urban environment, given the large geographic extent of the rural area across the Auckland region.
- That the current diversity of panel members and represented rural industries is one of the panel's significant strengths and ensuring that membership retains a mix of industry representatives (i.e., policy staff) and on the ground experts (farmers, growers) is supported.

Areas where the panel could be improved were identified as follows:

- Continued information sharing, but more space created for more workshop style discussion on matters of relevance, as that enhances greater discussion, transparency and collaboration.
- Using the panel for discussion within scheduled meetings, but also for out of meeting cycle matters.

- Look at the opportunity where members could bring along other representatives to support discussions (e.g. farmers, growers, science or legal experts etc.).
- The overarching theme in the above observations is the desire to ensure that the expertise and experience of panel members is drawn on as much as possible to help inform council considerations when developing positions, while acknowledging that the panel acts in an advisory capacity.

Community involvement or engagement

Panel members have links to their representative bodies and informal networks through their respective sectors. Several panel members encourage their wider networks to participate in ambassador programmes and environmental award initiatives, and regional award recipients are provided the opportunity to share their success with the panel.

Other areas to highlight

The Lead Officer (Warren McLennan) retired from council in March 2025. A new Lead Officer (Dave Allen) for the panel was selected from early June 2025, alongside the creation of a Deputy Lead Officer role (Andrew Bird), consistent with most other panels. The new Lead and Deputy Lead Officers were introduced to the panel in their new capacity at the last panel meeting of the term, on 1 August 2025.

Reflections or recommendations

Drawing on the feedback provided by panel members and support council representatives, there is a mutual desire to move the panel's work programme to a more strategic approach to identifying and progressing issues of common interest, and to better facilitate collaborative opportunities and interaction between panel members and council representatives. This will build on the good foundation of the regular meeting frequency that is currently in place while looking at the opportunity to engage informally as required, including at venues other than the council premises.

From a membership perspective, opportunities have been identified to enhance the membership base. There is only one Māori representative, when the current Terms of Reference requires two, consistent with a desire to increase Māori participation in panels generally for the 2022-25 electoral term. Additionally, the inclusion of representative bodies for aquaculture, marine industries, or other marine activities with reliance on well managed catchments more generally might be interested in participation on the panel.

Appendix 1: Rural Advisory Panel activities during the 2022-2025 electoral term.

Topic category and number of council staff reports received over the eleven Rural Advisory Panel meetings (2022-2025 electoral term).

Category	Legislative reform / policy initiatives	Council business processes	Storm Recovery	Operational and Implementation programmes	Awards, panel field trips
Rural Advisory Panel Chair's update		11			
Panel's Terms of Reference – overview / members priorities for 2022-2025 term, meeting date confirmation in 2024, 2025		3			
Freshwater Instrument reform (NPSFM, NES-F, Stock exclusion, farm planning, water measurement), and related legislative reform and guidance (every meeting)	11				
Future Development Strategy – Rural chapter (April, June 2023)	2				
Southern Rural Strategy (Feb 2024, Nov 2024, May 2025)	3				
Biosecurity Act Amendment Bill submission (Nov 2024)	1				

Advisory Panels 2022-2025 End of Term Reports.

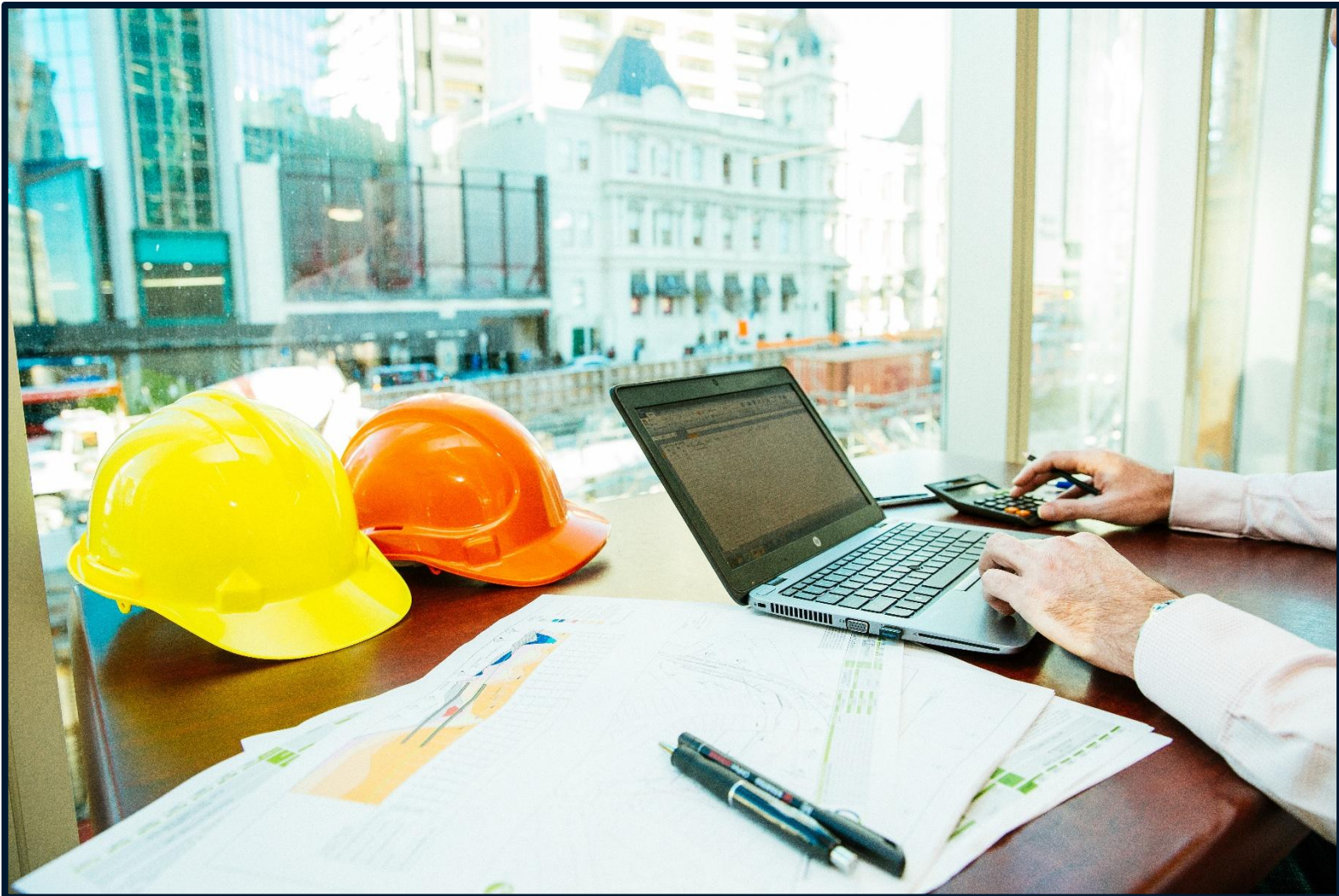
Category	Legislative reform / policy initiatives	Council business processes	Storm Recovery	Operational and Implementation programmes	Awards, panel field trips
Biodiversity Credit System submission (Sept 2023)	1				
Refreshing the Regional Pest Management Plan preparation (Aug 2024, May 2025)	2				
Joint review of Auckland Transport and Auckland Council related bylaws (Aug 2024)	1				
National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land update (June 2023)	1				
Dangerous Dams Policy (Feb 2024)	1				
Resilient Auckland – coastal and flood hazard planning (April 2023)	1				
Enhancing environmental criteria to prioritise Regional Unsealed Road Improvements (Policy department) (May 2024)	1				
Regulatory Compliance monitoring activities for dairy farms and charging / invoicing system (Nov 2023, Feb 2024)		2			

Rural Advisory Panel 2022-2025 End of Term Report.

Category	Legislative reform / policy initiatives	Council business processes	Storm Recovery	Operational and Implementation programmes	Awards, panel field trips
Dairy nitrogen cap reporting update (2024)				1	
Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan (Sept 2023)		1			
Auckland Council representation arrangements for the 2025 local body elections (Feb 2024); Initial Proposal (Aug 2024)		2			
Annual Budget review 2023-2024 (April 2023), Long-term Plan process overview (Feb 2024), Long- term Plan 2024-2034 input to Budget Committee (May 2024)		3			
Election year policies 2025 – information memoranda (May 2025)		1			
Natural Environment and Water Quality Targeted Rate annual report to council (2023-24)		1			
National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management Implementation Programme (Nov 2024, Feb 2025, Aug 2025)				3	

Advisory Panels 2022-2025 End of Term Reports.

Category	Legislative reform / policy initiatives	Council business processes	Storm Recovery	Operational and Implementation programmes	Awards, panel field trips
Onsite Wastewater System plan change (May 2025)				1	
Rural Road Drainage asset management (Nov 2023)				1	
Auckland Transport Rural Road Maintenance Programme (2023-2024) (Sept 2023); Unsealed Road Improvement Programme 2024/25-2026/27				2	
Flood Response Work (Recovery Office (June 2023), Healthy Waters & Flood Resilience department (April 2023, Sept 2023, Feb 2024)			4		
Rural operational activities update (Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience department) (June 2023, May, Aug, Nov 2024, Feb, May, Aug 2025)				7	
Balance Farm Environment Award (Sept 2023, May 2025)					2
Royal Agricultural Society – Royal Ambassador (Sept 2023)					1
TOTAL BY TOPIC CATEGORY	25	24	4	15	3



Te Kāhui Tohutohu mō te Pakihi Iti

Small Business Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.

Introduction

At the start of the term the Mayor decided to establish a new advisory panel to bring the voice of small business into Council. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the New Zealand economy, accounting for 97 per cent of all businesses nationally and a significant portion of employment and GDP. Auckland is home to a large number of these businesses, representing a significant proportion of the nation's total business locations and employment, with 35 per cent of national business locations and employees located in the region as of February 2024.

Chaired by Councillor Turner the approach to the new panel was to bring together a group of business owners with wide business experience to provide the organisation and the Governing Body with direct access to, and insights from, business owners. Initial scoping sessions tested the appetite and potential availability of small business owners for a direct engagement mechanism at a strategic level with Council.

As a new panel, it took time to establish the right mix of members and cadence. By the end of the term, this started taking shape. There is an opportunity to identify common issues the panel can provide greater level of advice back into the council on. The panel agreed that if the organisation and Governing Body find it useful to engage with small business owners as a panel, they are prepared to commit time to do it. Members value and appreciate the opportunity to bring their unique perspectives to Auckland Council.

Panel member insight – while **“many of the council’s advisory panels have a very common theme that align them through their membership, the small business advisory panel is quite unique. Although we align in business, our opinions differ and I think that what makes us special.”**

Staff have been proactive in offering their views on the value of engaging with the panel including:

A practical ‘sounding board’ to hear business related ideas and practices.

A way for members of the small business community to connect directly to staff involved in relevant programmes and initiatives.

Purpose

This report summarises the panel's activities over the 2022-25 electoral term. Panel members presenting to Planning and Policy Committee on 11 September will provide the panel's insights on key issues and opportunities for small business in the Auckland region.

Membership

The membership of the Panel during the 2022-25 electoral term included a wide range of sectors including industrial services, hospitality & retail, legal & business services, education & community development, and creative & cultural industries. It reflects Tāmaki Makarau's cultural diversity and includes voices from different geographic areas across the region. This diverse makeup enables the panel to provide well rounded strategic advice to Council on matters that impact small businesses.

Chair:

- Councillor Ken Turner Auckland Council

Panel Members:

- Andrew Kennedy Prudentia Law
- Damian Smith Devamp Construction Ltd
- Dean Stuart HydroVac
- Jo Plant Exile Hair Design
- Manawharepu Udy Ngahere Communities
- Raghbir Singh Radio Spice
- Rajesh Lal Stonex Jewellers Otahuhu
- Richette Rodger Otahuhu Business Association
- Robson Liang International Education Fund Ltd
- Sēmisi Potauaine Sēmisi Potauaine Artist Ltd
- Sunny Kaushal The Shakespeare

Support staff:

The Panel was supported by the following staff:

- Lead Officer – Robert Irvine, GM, Licensing and Compliance
- Governance Advisor – Lexy Turner
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

Elected Members:

- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey.

Background and context

The panel provides a mechanism for engagement with diverse small businesses across the Auckland region. Auckland is home to approximately 227,380 businesses, with the vast majority being small enterprises. The Panel can provide advice to the council within the remit of the following topics:

- council policies, plans and strategies relevant to small business
- regional and strategic matters relevant to small business interests
- any matter of particular interest or concern to the small business sector.

The panel met five times since formal appointment in 2024. Their work programme was informed by topics suggested by panel members, panel staff, and by kaimahi, including Auckland Transport, who proactively identified they wished to seek the advice of the panel.

Key elements of the Panel's work programme included:

- Public safety and emergency management
- Compliance and regulation
- Governance and strategic planning
- Transport
- Technology and innovation with a focus on AI
- Economic development and business engagement.

Work programme priorities

A summary table of the presentations and topics provided to the panel is set out in [Appendix 1](#).

The following topics were of particular interest:

- The performance of the Council as key enabler or a hinderance to business
- Cost of doing business with Council and cost to business of Council processes
- Making it easier to do business with Council including ability to access staff
- Compliance
 - Resource Management Act reform
 - Enforcement capability of local government
- Business Improvement District Programme
- City centre small business environment and the on-the-ground reality for those businesses
- Economic development and how the Small Business Advisory Panel can contribute to the development on the new group Economic Development Strategy in 2026
- Resilience in changing business landscape.
 - Navigating shifts in urban planning and development such as city centre works impacts.
 - Responding to the impacts of climate change
 - Supporting small businesses to remain agile and competitive in rapid technological advancements, such as the introduction of artificial intelligence.
- International focus
 - Collaboration between international companies, local businesses and council
 - Tourism related opportunities.

Areas for consideration

At the 28 July 2025 panel meeting, members were asked to contribute any observations on how the panel is working and whether it's a valuable mechanism through the lens of small business. Noting the small business owners are busy running their own businesses and time is a critical resource. Panel members made the following observations about the value of the panel and observations for the future:

- The panel is new and it will take some time to become established and recognised especially compared to other long-standing panels.
- Recognition of the valuable opportunity to raise matters of interest or concern to small business directly with key departments and individuals within the Council organisation able to address or consider those matters.
- Appreciate what we've seen and heard so far and looking forward to being a change maker in the future.
- Provides a valuable insight into what is happening in Auckland Council.
- Need to understand how advice offered to staff impacts or is incorporated into Council decision-making.
- Importance of the organisation not seeing the panel as a substitute for effective engagement with small business across the region.
- An initiative which makes a lot of sense. It was required and it's the first time, probably that this kind of sincere effort has been done to bring these business owners together.
- To create this sort of relationship between the council and businesses has been very helpful.
- Opportunity for better integration in upcoming plans, overall helpful and heading in the right direction.
- Up to the council to determine if they see value in the panel and hearing our advice. Happy to contribute if it is going to make a difference.
- An opportunity exists to expand membership to include small businesses in the technology and innovation sectors, as well as start-up businesses.

Community involvement or engagement

Panel members maintain both formal and informal connections to their respective sectors through networks such as Ōtāhuhu Business Association. Several members were recruited during the terms via these established relationships. As the panel is still relatively new, opportunities to leverage members' wider networks were being explored.

Panel activities

In 2025, working with officers, the panel wrote to Ministers Hon Simon Watts (Minister for Local Government) and Hon Simeon Brown (Minister for Auckland) supporting legislative changes to enhance Auckland Council's enforcement capabilities. The letter was prompted by a briefing to the Panel on compliance and regulatory challenges Auckland Council was experiencing.

Key points made by the panel were:

- That the panel was supportive of specific legislative amendments to empower Auckland Council to issue infringement notices for minor breaches of bylaws and local regulations.
- That the council currently has no ability to issue fines for offences such as illegal signage, obstruction of public spaces, or ongoing storage of materials in town centres. These types of low-level breaches fall outside existing infringement regimes and must be resolved either informally or through costly and time-consuming prosecutions - neither of which is fit for purpose in a city of Auckland's scale. While each breach may appear minor, together they erode the safety, accessibility, and vibrancy of public spaces.
- That the panel was seeking a legislative amendment to enable Auckland Council to issue infringement notices for minor bylaw breaches, backed by the ability to set appropriate fine levels regionally, within agreed boundaries.
- The panel noted this approach would deliver faster resolution, better compliance, and a more consistent regulatory framework across local government statutes.
- That the panel requested discussion with Auckland Council on wider changes to legislation impacting licensing and compliance noting there are various pieces of legislation that provide undue regulations on business. Examples included council's compliance on hairdressers in the Health (Hairdressers)

Regulations 1980, and council's requirement to monitor amusement devices under the Amusement Devices Regulations 1978.

- The panel noted the suggested change would reduce red tape for responsible operators, support a more enabling environment for small businesses, and free up capacity in the courts. Most importantly, it would equip Auckland Council with the right tools to manage growth and ensure public spaces remain safe, accessible and well-maintained.
- The panel noted is also sends a strong signal that the government trusts Auckland to solve local issues with the right regulatory levers in place - an approach Aucklanders and the business community expect and support.

Engagement on Annual Plan

Panel members Richette Rodgers and Dean Stuart presented to the Budget Committee workshop on 30 April 2025. During their presentation, they provided feedback on the Annual Budget on behalf of the Small Business Advisory Panel, highlighting reflections from a small business perspective.

Notable reflections from the workshop included:

- The Small Business Advisory Panel were supportive of bed tax levies based on the beneficiaries of events contributing.
- The Small Business Advisory Panel were supportive of the use congestion charge measures for roads” to enable “reliable travel time cost savings for businesses across Auckland and significant improvement to the economy,” as seen in overseas evidence.
- After noting the current recession and the anticipated rise in receiverships, the Small Business Advisory Panel did not support the proposed rates increase to 5.3 per cent, citing concerns around input costs. One Panel Member commented:

“I think there has to be some smarter way of doing things. When you run a monopoly organisation to drive cost savings and you get a lot of inefficiency creep, but my observation is that there has got to be some better, smarter, innovative ways of doing things... I see a lot of inefficiencies from an outside business perspective.”

The Small Business Advisory Panel strongly urged Council “for future budgets to have focus on being innovative on how to reduce the costs.”



Appendix 1: Small Business Advisory Panel activities during the 2022-2025 electoral term.

Topic category and number of council staff reports received over the five Small Business Advisory Panel meetings (2022-2025 electoral term).

Category	Public Safety and Emergency Management	Compliance and Regulation	Governance, Strategic Planning, and Business Process	Transport	Technology and Innovation	Economic Development and Business Engagement
Auckland Emergency Management – Business and Partnership Programme (Nov 2024)	1					
Auckland Council Safety Updates (Regional - Nov 2024, Community -May 2025)	2					
National Retail Investigation Unit – NZ Police (May 2025)	1					
Compliance Approach (Update – Feb 2025, Letter to Central Government May 2025)		2				
Health and Hygiene Bylaw Review (May 2025)		1				
Resource Management Act Changes (July 2025)		1				
Whakawhanaungatanga (July 2024)			1			

Small Business Advisory Panel 2022-2025 End of Term Report.

Category	Public Safety and Emergency Management	Compliance and Regulation	Governance, Strategic Planning, and Business Process	Transport	Technology and Innovation	Economic Development and Business Engagement
Panel Priorities (July 2024)			1			
Update from Principal Panel Advisor			1			
Annual budget (Feb 2025)			1			
Mayoral Update (July 2024, May 2025)			2			
Report back on panel activities (July 2024, May 2025)			2			
End of Term recommendations (July 2025)			1			
Room to move – Auckland Transport (July 2024, Nov 2024, Feb 2025)				3		
Council Use of Artificial Intelligence (Feb 2025)					1	
Auckland Economic Development Office (July 2025)						1
Business Improvement District Programme (July 2025)						1
TOTAL BY TOPIC CATEGORY	4	4	9	3	1	2