

## Are the Mayor and Councilors trying to Rig the Election?

Mayor Steve Chadwick and at least four current Councilors are affiliated with Te Arawa and are supportive of Te Arawa's *Vision 2050*, which includes a vision of **co-governance** with the Rotorua Lakes Council. Several other Councilors are at least sympathetic towards Te Arawa's aspirations for **co-governance** and have recently voted accordingly.

**Co-governance** means that Te Arawa would be guaranteed 50% of seats on Council as of right. With a Te Arawa-affiliated Mayor or just one more Te Arawa-friendly Councilor, Te Arawa would have full control of Council and right-of-veto over any issue. Te Arawa believe that as “mana whenua” (people of the land) the Treaty of Waitangi entitles them to **co-governance**. However, that is not a view supported by Parliament or the Courts.

The Māori Electoral Population (MEP) is 28% of the General Electoral Population (GEP). Te Arawa comprise an estimated half of the MEP (say about 14% of the GEP). Many Rotorua people consider that Te Arawa claiming to represent all voters in the MEP to be implausible, therefore undemocratic and contrary to the Local Government Act 2002.

The Local Body Elections coming up in October 2022 are shaping up to be a referendum of whether the people of Rotorua accept **co-governance**.

However, not satisfied with allowing the people of Rotorua to decide the future of Rotorua, the current Council is already implementing **co-governance**, without consultation, so that the next election occurs with **co-governance** in place.

For example, Council consulted Te Arawa as to whether they would like a Māori Ward at the next election. Te Arawa confirmed they would and, without consulting the rest of Rotorua, Council voted in favour. Another example? A **Co-Governance Committee** has been set up to develop Rotorua's position on Three Waters reforms.

To be fair, in democratic terms, the 28% Māori Electoral Population should have three Councilor seats to vote for out of ten on Council. The 72% enrolled on the General Roll should get seven votes. The outcome would be arguably proportionate, if not agreeable to some, because each vote cast would have equal value.

# Options

Eight options were initially considered behind the scenes. On 28 July another workshop only considered three “Representation Models”:

## Option 1

- Those enrolled on the **Māori** roll would get to vote for **three** Māori Councillors from the **Māori** ward;
- those enrolled on the **General** roll would get to vote for **seven** Councillors from the **General** ward.

## Option 2

- Those enrolled on the **Māori** roll would get to vote for **three** Maori Councillors from the Māori ward;
- those enrolled on the **General** roll would get to vote for **six** Councillors from the General ward;
- both **Māori and General** roll voters would have **one** extra vote for a Councillor from an ‘At Large’ ward.

## Option 3

- Those enrolled on the **Māori** roll would get to vote for **two** Māori Councillors from the Māori Ward;
- those enrolled on the **General** roll would get to vote for **four** Councillors from the General ward;
- both **Māori and General** roll voters would have **four** votes each for four Councillors from the ‘At Large’ ward.

In all cases everyone would also have one vote for the Mayor.

**The 28 July workshop directed officials to prepare consultation documents only offering Option 3.**

While the Option 1 is at least proportional, Option 3 doubles the voting power of those on the Māori Electoral Population to six votes while only increasing the voting power of General voters by one seventh to eight votes. This appears to be a creative way of giving Māori voters disproportionate voting power which will be fundamentally undemocratic.

If form is any guide, Option 3 is likely to be endorsed by the current crop of Te Arawa-friendly Councillors to swing the 2022 election in their favour.

Like Parliament and the Courts, RDRR members do not believe that the Treaty guarantees **co-governance** to mana whenua. While Te Arawa should be treated by the next Mayor and Council with aroha nui (much love), courtesy and respect as mana whenua, we do not believe they should be given preferential treatment at the expense of the General population.

