



Hon Peter Dunne  
Leader, UnitedFuture

新西兰 Nieuw Zeeland Νέα Ζηλανδία 紐西蘭 La Nouvelle Zélande ニュージーラン  
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НОВЗЕЛАНДСКИЙ Aotearoa Nu'u Sila La Nuova Zelanda Nova Zelândia ניו זילנד

# Stepping Forward

## Public Discussion Paper on New Zealand's Population and National Identity



## FOREWORD

Welcome to the second in a series of United**Future** discussion papers. Like its predecessor, *Made in NZ: kiwi parents*, our aim is to invite public response to develop United**Future** policy.

As before, we have chosen ideas that are either our policy at this time and we want confirmation/criticism of them, or ideas that are popular and we want to know what your views are on them.

Not every idea mentioned in this document will become United**Future** policy. Some ideas are mentioned with the sole aim of hearing your views on a policy. Consequently, we have mentioned both the pros and cons of ideas so that you know we are flexible and not tied to any idea.

We invite your feedback from now until the beginning of May.

## VISION

New Zealand is changing; our population is growing, we comprise a greater diversity of ethnicities and we are striving to cement our own national identity. It is important that we begin to address the complex long term issues that are at the core of this changing New Zealand.

United**Future** acknowledges that we need to do more than just tinker around the edges. Rather we need systemic, integrated policies across all sectors that compliment one another and contribute to a long term plan for the future.

United**Future** sees New Zealand as having a culturally diverse population that is continually infused with overseas skills and expertise through immigration. Immigrants will always find New Zealand a welcoming home although must accept that coming to live here is a privilege not a right. Links with other countries will be enhanced through immigration, and by establishing strong relationships with foreign students. An emphasis on developing skill levels will promote a prosperous society, and the empowerment of ethnic groups will promote harmony.

In the future we see Kiwis as no longer being distinctly Maori, Polynesian, Asian or European people. Instead we will become a fusion of these roots both ethnically and culturally, bringing out our own identity, enhancing characteristics developed in our 168 years of nationhood.

United**Future** envisages New Zealand moving to become an independent republic within the Commonwealth, with a modern parliamentary democracy, and a formal constitution.

## ISSUES

- As part of our national identity, should New Zealand move to become a republic with a written, entrenched constitution?
- Does New Zealand need to review the MMP electoral process and what place should the Maori seats hold within it?
- What does it mean to be a New Zealand citizen?
- What criteria should be used when selecting immigrants?
- Would New Zealand benefit from a larger population?
- A growing population places increased stress on the environment, resources and infrastructure such as electricity generation/distribution and roading systems.
- Should we prioritise the immigration of people from some cultures over others? To what extent should migrants retain their cultural identities?

## PRINCIPLES

- Immigration needs to be integrated more closely with other policy areas such as housing, education and the economy.
- The provision of quality education is of paramount importance in ensuring that ethnic groups are not marginalised.
- There needs to be long term planning for where populations are sustainable, in conjunction with local government and businesses.

## ISSUE 1

***As part of our national identity, should New Zealand move to become a republic with a written, entrenched constitution?***

### Discussion

New Zealand is a young country, with a unique culture reflecting our European and Maori heritage, and emerging strong Asian and Pacific influences. The constitutional framework and system of government should reflect the emerging face of New Zealand today. As part of this process, should New Zealand consider becoming an independent republic within the Commonwealth, like India or South Africa, with its own President carrying out the functions currently performed by the Governor-General? Consideration also needs to be given to the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in relation to a written constitution and whether its principles should be incorporated in a constitution.

### Questions to consider

- Should the Government embark on a public education process on constitutional matters, possibly leading to the development of some reform questions that could be tested in a referendum at a later date?
- Do you support the notion of New Zealand becoming a republic within the Commonwealth; if so, why?
- Should New Zealand, as a republic, have a formal written constitution; and should the Treaty of Waitangi be incorporated within it?
- Would you support a new design for our national flag?
- Do you agree with the current timetable of 2020 for settlement of historic claims under the Treaty of Waitangi?
- Do you consider that New Zealand needs the titles of knights and dames to be returned to the current honours system?
- Should we have a New Zealand Day separate from Waitangi Day to celebrate our nationhood independent of political and historical division?

## ISSUE 2

***Does New Zealand need to review the MMP electoral process and what place should the Maori seats hold within it?***

### Discussion

The Royal Commission on the Electoral System in 1985-6 gave considerable thought to the future of the Maori seats. It concluded that the seats had not helped Maori and that they would achieve better representation through a proportional party-list system. The Commission therefore recommended that if the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system was adopted, the Maori seats should be abolished.

As the prospect of electoral reform became more real in 1992-3, some Maori began to rally to the defence of the seats. Eventually, following strong representations from Maori organisations, the seats were retained under the new MMP system. Their number was allowed to increase or decrease according to the results of the regular Maori electoral option.

Currently there are seven Maori seats, all of which are significantly smaller than any general electorate seat. In the current Parliament there is an overhang of one seat (making Parliament 121 seats in total) because the Maori Party won more electorate seats than it party vote share entitled it to. In future Parliaments, it is possible the overhang may increase significantly if the Maori Party wins more electorate seats. On current polling, the Maori Party's overhang could be as much as four seats, lifting Parliament's numbers to 124. This will distort Parliament's proportionality and perhaps affect the make-up of the next government.

### Questions to consider

- Should New Zealand have a binding referendum on the future of MMP?
- Should we have a referendum on the future of Maori seats or should we simply abolish them in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission? If so, what timetable do you think is appropriate to do this?
- Is New Zealand's Parliament an appropriate size?

## ISSUE 3

### ***What does it mean to be a New Zealand citizen?***

#### Discussion

If immigration adds more people without increasing skill levels within the population, it could conceivably contribute to the emergence of a low-wage economy and depress employment and living standards among working-class communities. According to one source from 2004 data, only 15 per cent of immigrants had skills New Zealand needed. Conversely, there are studies which show that a balanced, consistent long-term immigration policy boosts economic growth.

Unfortunately the way New Zealand's current immigration policy operates means that large numbers of new New Zealanders stay here for only a short time before leaving for Australia. In order to prevent New Zealand from becoming merely a stepping stone to Australia, should immigration policy prioritise people who will make a long term contribution to New Zealand?

### Questions to consider

- When should a person become a citizen – automatically if they are born here to NZ citizens, or when they have proven themselves worthy and committed themselves to live and work here?
- Should citizenship be revoked temporarily or permanently, if so under what conditions?
- Should a potential migrant be required to take a civics examination as part of becoming a citizen?

## ISSUE 4

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## Questions to consider

- To what extent should we take age, language and culture into account when considering potential immigrants?
- Should we concentrate on attracting skilled migrants, entrepreneurs and investors who will raise national productivity rates?
- Should we avoid committing to a net overall migration inflow per annum?
- Should we have policies to ensure that if immigrants come here and are accepted that they are able to use their skills without restraints; as occurs in academia?

## ISSUE 5

### ***Would New Zealand benefit from a larger population?***

## Discussion

One reason to increase a population is to continue to increase the nation's productive capacity.

Another is so that New Zealand may provide for its growing number of elderly citizens as baby-boomers age. But if we do attempt this, how do we go about it?

There are only a limited number of ways to increase the population short of physically stopping people emigrating; have more children ourselves or increase the number of immigrants.

New Zealand's birth rate has been declining for the past forty years, this year excepted. It could be unwise for governments to embark on ambitious projects to reverse falling fertility rates as Australia and Singapore have done. To do so would mean trying to change cultural, economic and social processes that cannot be controlled. The tendency for women to have fewer children and delay having them until later in life can be a positive development. Older people are more likely to be financially secure, which makes for a more stable family environment, although there are greater health risks.

Perhaps the emphasis needs to be on making families stronger and better even if that contributes to falling fertility rates in some segments of the population.

Some argue that a larger (migrant) workforce is needed to support an ageing population. However, most jobs created in our economy are low-wage jobs, which have a limited capacity to generate the extra tax revenue. Secondly, immigrants eventually retire and become super annuitants themselves. However, if migrants enter New Zealand at a younger age (in their twenties or thirties) then by the time they retire, they will have generated enough tax revenue to pay their own way.

Some say an endlessly rising number of inhabitants may not be a sensible solution to the problems posed by New Zealand's ageing population. Steps have already been taken to gradually remodel the retirement and savings systems in the shape of the Retirement Commission and KiwiSaver, but are these enough?

### Questions to consider

- Is immigration the only viable option to increase New Zealand's population?
- Is a declining birth rate a cause for concern?
- Should the government incentivise people to have children?
- Is the age when people have children an issue or not? Why?

## ISSUE 6

***A growing population places increased stress on the environment, resources and infrastructure such as electricity generation/distribution and roading systems.***

### Discussion

A 1-percent increase in population fifty years ago implied an extra 20,000 New Zealanders whereas, in 2007, it means an extra 40,000. At the same time, rising living standards and life style changes mean that those 40,000 individuals consume substantially more than twice the amount of resources used by the 20,000 half a century earlier. This has contributed to the strains over housing, water, energy, traffic and land-use that have become increasingly apparent in recent years.

New Zealand has the capacity to increase its population substantially but without adding to the burden on the Auckland region, which is already too large and congested. Instead it would be better to see regional towns grow and industries and services more widespread.

### Questions to consider

- Would an increase in population that benefitted the economy be worth the trade-off if it damaged the environment?
- Could you tie immigration to specific regions to overcome labour shortages and overcrowding in other regions?
- Should the number of immigrants admitted each year be tied to other policy areas such as housing?
- Should other organisations such as the Reserve Bank of New Zealand be given a stronger input into immigration levels?

## ISSUE 7

***Should we prioritise the immigration of people from some cultures over others? To what extent should migrants retain their cultural identities?***

### Discussion

There is considerable evidence to suggest that many immigrants have great difficulty adapting to conditions in New Zealand. This is because they do not know how to source information, are ignorant of government regulations, have a poor understanding of local market forces and consumer behaviour, are not fluent in English, and have poor business networks. Often this creates challenges both for migrants and their local communities.

New Zealand, because of its geographic location and historical development, is largely an amalgam of British, Maori and to a lesser but increasing extent, Pacific Island and Asian cultures. These cultures, along with the physical characteristics of our country (e.g. large wide open spaces and magnificent scenery) form the basis of our national identity. Existing programmes to help new migrants settle into New Zealand and its way of life are patchy. There are some programmes sponsored by the Office of Ethnic Affairs. Others are organised by local authorities, community or ethnic organisations.

### Questions to consider

- Should migrants be actively encouraged to adopt New Zealand culture and values?
- Would a civics programme ensure the appropriate induction of immigrants into New Zealand society? Who would provide this?
- Should family sponsors have to prove that they are able to fulfil all sponsorship obligations (such as supplying accommodation and covering the cost of any welfare benefits drawn by the family member) for the benefit stand-down period?



## FEEDBACK

As said at the beginning, the purpose of this document is to put forward a swag of ideas and hear your views on them. Each proposal has its merits, but there may also be downsides – apart from the ones we've already mentioned. Let us know these, too.

Please answer whichever questions you want.

We would appreciate your responses by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, in time to consider them and decide upon our policy for the forthcoming election.

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2. Do you support the notion of New Zealand becoming a republic within the Commonwealth; if so, why?
3. Should New Zealand, as a republic, have a formal written constitution; and should the Treaty of Waitangi be incorporated within it?
4. Would you support a new design for our national flag?
5. Do you agree with the current timetable of 2020 for settlement of historic claims under the Treaty of Waitangi?
6. Do you consider that New Zealand needs the titles of knights and dames to be returned to the current honours system?
7. Should we have a New Zealand Day separate from Waitangi Day to celebrate our nationhood independent of political and historical division?

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3. Is New Zealand's Parliament an appropriate size?

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Freepost to: Hon Peter Dunne MP, United**Future**, Parliament Buildings, Wellington  
Or email: [peter.dunne@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:peter.dunne@parliament.govt.nz)

May we post or email you information?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_