



Qld Government's – “Whole of Government” approach to Pacific Islanders. Response to the draft policy from Te Kohanga ote whenua hou.2006

“Kia mau koe ki nga kupu o ou tupuna”.
Hold fast to the words of your ancestors

E te atua, he whakahonore ii tona ingoa, nau nei nga mea katoa
E nga tupuna, haere, haere, haere atu ra....tatou te hunga ora....
E nga iwi, e nga reo, e nga hau e wha, tena tatou katoa

To begin, I wish to clarify my position in relation to this document. I have responded to this draft strategy on behalf of the Maori community group *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* in my capacity as the group's secretary and vice president. However, I have approached the task by expressing my personal views based on my own experience and knowledge. Prior to submitting this response, I received feedback from the other members of the *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* committee. This document includes their responses and has been endorsed by them.

Another comment I wish to make is that I have a Maori perspective on these matters. I am not a Pacific Islander, who are people of a different culture. I understand why governments tend to bundle us all together, but that is not an accurate reflection of the relationship between the two ethnic groups on the ground. Therefore, the first point the *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* committee agreed upon, was that the title of the document should read; *Draft Queensland Government Strategy for Maori and Pacific Islander Communities*.

In response to my reading of the document, I have the following comments to make:

Pages 1&2 - Introduction

Some of the data presented in the document's introduction could be improved. While acknowledging the existence of different Polynesian peoples, the data is not representative of those differences. Maori are mainly concerned with figures that concern Maori.

During one of own research projects, I interviewed Wellington District Commander, Superintendent Pieri Munro. As a Maori police officer who has spent many years engaging with Maori communities, he said he found when Maori community leaders are presented with social statistics (including data on crime rates) which specifically refer to Maori people; they tend to

only concern themselves with figures that specifically relate to the geographic or tribal area in which they live. Understandably, statistics are most useful when they help us to consider the problems that occur in our own communities.

During 2006, a staff member of New Zealand's former Department of Maori Affairs, now Te Puni Kokiri, was based in Brisbane to conduct research on Maori living in Australia. This research is not complete and the findings are not yet available, but I have been told that some early results emerging from a sampling of the survey responses, combined with ABS data that (in consultation with ABS) was adjusted to correct an acknowledged undercount, indicate the following:

- It is likely there are between 115,000 and 125,000 Maori living in Australia
- This figure represents approximately 18% of all Maori people
- At current rates, by 2026, it is estimated 1/3 of all Maori will be living in Australia
- In 2006, it is likely there are 35,500 Maori living in Queensland
- 70% of respondents reported 'much better' employment since moving to Australia
- The population is highly mobile; 75% of respondents moved address between 1996 and 2001

Some of the qualitative findings indicate Maori move to Australia for a combination of "pull factors" (seeking better employment opportunities, sunshine and lifestyle), and "push factors" (getting away from problems such as gangs, drugs and negative stereotypes).

Page 6 - Access to services

I agree there are barriers to accessing services, but believe another reason for low rates of utilisation is that for Maori and Pacific Islanders, family based support options are often the first preference for the aged, disabled and troubled.

Page 7 – Education and Family

To have more Maori liaisons everywhere (including schools) would be wonderful, but in the past, *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* has enjoyed working on many successful projects with schools where the liaison is Anglo-Australian. Sometimes energy, commitment and good cross cultural management are more important than ethnic 'sameness'.

I agree violence is a problem among Maori youth and within Maori households, and it is reasonable to say cultural dislocation and low incomes are contributors.

Page 8 – Family

In my view, disconnection with Church is more of a Pacific Islander problem than a Maori problem. Maori don't tend to emphasise the value of obedience to Church culture in the same way Pacific Islanders do and Maori youth are generally not under the same pressures in that regard.

Page 8 - Law and Justice

Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou has provided Brisbane's youth detention centres with a Maori language and culture program since 1996. While detained young people comprise a very small proportion of young people within the criminal justice system, the overrepresentation of Maori and Pacific Islander young people is reflected in the numbers of detained young people. In 1996, sixteen percent of young people detained at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre were of Maori or Pacific Islander descent (*Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou*, 1996). This number fell during the middle years of the past decade, but recently the numbers have increased. Currently, *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* estimates that 25% of young people detained at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre are of Maori or Pacific Islander descent.

Greater numbers of Maori and Pacific Islander police liaisons may improve the relationship between the police and Maori and Pacific Islander young people and families, but I doubt that as a stand alone strategy, this would reduce the number of offences committed by these groups. I would argue there is a need to establish a forum for the specific purpose of structuring the engagement between police and community-based Maori and Pacific Islander leaders and service providers. While the membership of Maori police officers and liaisons would be important, officers with decision making power would also need to attend such a forum. In my observation, this type of police and community engagement encourages the development of manageable, localised initiatives aimed at specific problems.

Page 9 - Cross Government Actions

Does the Government's objective to improve the communities' access to public services include those services already provided by non-government organisations? South East Queensland's

Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou ass. inc response to the document, *Draft Queensland Government Strategy for Pacific Islander Communities*. Deirdre Green, 7 Dec 2006

Maori community has the capacity to deliver a wide range of services to its own members, but there is a lack of government support for such an approach. For Maori people living in Queensland, government funding is mostly limited to 'one off' events like arts projects. There is a serious shortage of funding opportunities for community-based initiatives that aim to deliver ongoing professional social services.

Page 10 - Police Initiatives

While I realise this information was probably provide to you by QPS, I was very surprised to see QPS promote our youth detention centre program without mentioning our name. As previously mentioned, *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* created and implemented this program, and has continued to deliver and develop the program uninterrupted for ten years. The Maori police officer mentioned here is engaged by our organisation as a language teacher.

We would hope this oversight is corrected in the future. We are pleased that QPS is proud to support our program by allowing one of its officers to participate, but we expect to be properly acknowledged as the founders and ongoing providers of the program. The wording used to describe the program is acceptable because it is practically a direct lift from one of our own documents.

One of the other police initiatives mentioned, the 'licensing program' that aims to assist Maori and Pacific Islanders to obtain drivers licenses also operates in New Zealand. I have heard it is very successful.

Page 14 - Promoting Stronger Families in the Samoan Community

This sounds like a significant achievement for the Samoan community and *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* would be interested in implementing a similar initiative on behalf of Brisbane's Maori community.

Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou is in the process of testing support for the introduction of a Maori program to address Maori family violence in Queensland. This particular program is in operation throughout New Zealand and its facilitators have already offered to assist *Te Kohanga Ote Whenua Hou* as its plans to implement the program in Queensland progress.

Page 20 – The Multicultural Community Worker Program

The document states there are 20 workers employed in this program. Without taking the time to collect all the precise data, I wonder if one fulltime “Pacific Islander” worker sufficiently reflects the size and make up of the Maori and Pacific Islander population in Queensland. Is this worker a Maori or Pacific Islander person, and if Pacific Islander, what island, and are they male or female? According to the research I have to hand, it is likely that approximately 35,500 Maori people are living in Queensland. That is Maori people, not Pacific Islanders. Apart from migrants from the UK, does this represent the largest ethnic group living in Queensland?

Although no doubt the Samoan population is also undercounted, according to a Queensland Health report, the 1996 census showed 2,500 Samoans lived in Queensland. Even if that number has tripled over the past decade, it still amounts to about one quarter of the number of estimated Maori living in Queensland. I would be very interested to resolve the confusion around these population figures, but unfortunately the MAQ publication “Diversity Figures” is not at all helpful in this matter.

I conclude by thanking you for the opportunity to respond to this document. Please keep our organisation up to date with the future development of the Queensland Government’s strategies in relation to Maori and Pacific Islander people.