



COMMISSION FOR ECOLOGY, JUSTICE AND PEACE

Te Kōmihana Whakatairanga Mātai Hauropi, Tika me te Rangimārie

11 November 2021

SUBMISSION TO THE MĀORI AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

On

TE PIRE MŌ TE HARAREI TŪMATANUI O TE KĀHUI O MATARIKI/TE KĀHUI O MATARIKI PUBLIC HOLIDAY BILL

Ko ngā whakapono katoa i Ingarani, o ngā Weteriana, o Roma, me te ritenga Māori, e tikanga ngatahitia e ia

The several faiths of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome and also Māori custom shall alike be protected

Verbal commitment of Governor Hobson to Bishop Pompallier, Waitangi 1840

The Māori people have maintained their identity in this land. The peoples coming from Europe, and more recently from Asia, have not come to a desert. They have come to a land already marked by a rich and ancient heritage, as a unique and essential element of the identity of this country.

Pope John Paul II: Homily in Christchurch, 1986

Introduction

1. The Archdiocese of Wellington Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission supports this Bill and wishes it to proceed.

Recognition of all faiths and religious practices

2. As Catholics we understand ourselves to have inherited a measure of responsibility for the verbal assurance given to Bishop Pompallier at Waitangi in 1840 that faiths, which specifically included ritenga Māori, would be protected. We acknowledge and regret that assurance was not always upheld as it should have been, and that Māori religious perspectives and practices have not always been respected.
3. Our country and communities are strengthened by recognising and celebrating the diverse cultural and religious traditions of all the people who live here, beginning with tangata whenua. We support the position of the [Statement on Religious Diversity](#) July 2019, endorsed by the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand, that New Zealand's educational institutions, work environments and public services should recognise and accommodate diverse religious beliefs and practices. We see providing a public holiday to celebrate Matariki is a natural extension of that principle.

4. We recognise that Christian holy days have been among celebrations privileged to be recognised formally as public holidays. We wish to express our strong support that this recognition be given also to Matariki, as one step in a much longer journey of recognising the “rich and ancient heritage” of this land, as Pope John Paul II expressed it on his visit here in 1986.

Recognition of indigenous expertise

5. We support and acknowledge the expertise of Te Rōpū Arataki o Matariki/The Matariki Advisory Group in providing advice for the dates for the celebration of Matariki. We acknowledge that one of our most holy days, Easter, is also a changeable date set according to the lunar calendar by religious and cultural experts, and note that New Zealand society has easily been able to accommodate this.

Recognition and acknowledgement of difference in time scales and calendars

6. We acknowledge that local knowledge of the Maramataka, inherent understanding of local time and place, was disrupted by the imposition of a single external calendar developed far from here according to seasonal cycles developed during different seasonal weather patterns and different relationships with the natural environment. We welcome the revitalisation of traditional Māori understandings of time.
7. In many parts of the world, the Gregorian calendar lives comfortably alongside other ways of describing and measuring time, such as the Jewish, Islamic and Chinese calendars. We believe Aotearoa is also capable of including diverse perspectives on time, including recovering those aspects of pre-colonial Māori calendars which bring people together in ways that are life-giving for us all.
8. Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation following the Synod on the Amazon *Querida Amazonia* acknowledges the loss of cultural riches through colonisation, and says time needs to be found for the recovery and passing on of collective knowledge and memory:
“... it is important “to let older people tell their long stories” and for young people to take the time to drink deeply from that source.” *Querida Amazonia paragraph 34*
9. He encourages encounter and dialogue to ensure that cultural knowledge continues to develop and grow in community, rather than in isolation, and says other groups in society have nothing to fear or lose from this recognition.
“Starting from our roots, let us sit around the common table, a place of conversation and of shared hopes. In this way our differences, which could seem like a banner or a wall, can become a bridge. Identity and dialogue are not enemies. Our own cultural identity is strengthened and enriched as a result of dialogue with those unlike ourselves.” *Querida Amazonia paragraph 37*

Value of public holidays

10. As human beings, we all need opportunities for rest and recovery from work and study. In our individualised society, many people can see this only in terms of their own personal leisure or nuclear family celebrations. However, social cohesion also needs communal opportunities to rest, grow, learn,

worship, play, and celebrate together. We are pleased to see New Zealand's tradition of public holidays maintained and extended through this Bill.

Ensuring everyone is able to participate

11. However, we do wish to share our experience that because of the changing nature of work, fewer New Zealanders actually have time off on public holidays than used to be the case. With retail and other support services operating now almost every day of the year, our experience is that the designation of "public holiday" no longer guarantees that the most vulnerable are able to participate in communal time off, such as at Easter. This is especially the case for low-income workers and young people.

12. We would encourage the Māori Affairs Select Committee not to stop at consideration of making Matariki a public holiday, but also to consider ways to overcome other economic and social barriers that make it difficult for people to share in such celebrations.

Select Committee consideration

13. We wish the Select Committee the best in your consideration of this Bill and the submissions made on it. We do not feel that we have significant subject expertise on Matariki to add to our written submission through an oral submission, so are not requesting to appear before the Select Committee to speak to this submission.

14. However, if the Select Committee is interested in additional perspectives from our experience on the limitations of public holiday status to protect participation by marginalised New Zealanders in religious festivals such as Easter, we would be happy to contribute to your thinking on this, either through further written submissions or through an oral appearance before the Committee.