



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Āhua Iwi Kē

Ethnic Communities Advisory Panel

End of Term Report 2022-2025.

11 September, 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 Brigham 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.