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Our Futures: Te Pae Tawhiti Submission

There is a lot of room in New Zealand for demographic growth. The richness of New Zealand's natural geography and its food production capabilities exceed its population. However, being not blessed with energy and mineral resources in abundance, New Zealand has to trade for its wealth. This means that New Zealand has to compete for skilled migrants on the international market, and this is not easy because of its distance to markets and relative low income compared to the rest of the OECD.

Competition for skilled migrants is likely to increase, not decrease given global demography in the near future, with New Zealand continuing to lose some of its best and brightest to Australia and the United Kingdom. Returning migrants are therefore an important factor to consider. Kiwis who acquire skills, capital, and connections overseas are an asset rather than a liability if this resource is managed strategically.

Auckland is New Zealand's diversity engine and it is New Zealand's economic engine. New Zealand's future prosperity depends on its ability to maintain itself as a "lifestyle" choice destination among skilled migrants, as it is unlikely to ever exceed Australia in terms of pure economic standing.

Thus, the integration of new migrants and old migrants and indigenous people in Auckland is of utmost importance. Proactive, forwards looking efforts, like the recent **Taniwha-Dragon** events, are central to managing ethnic diversity.

Support for New Zealand's civil society drivers (e.g. active NGOs and iwi) in the form of connecting them up, providing financial support for signal events, and maintaining shared public spaces is crucial.

The quality and content of education in the super-city is important, and needs to be designed with Auckland's status as a diversity engine in mind. What is good education for Invercargill may not work for Auckland.

The lack of new migrant representation in Auckland Council and boards is appalling, and opens big fissures that can erupt into future social fractures just as happened in Sydney. As a strategy, all I can say is be PROACTIVE, PROACTIVE, PROACTIVE. New Zealand is demographically multicultural, formally bicultural, and institutionally mono-cultural at present, and this is not likely to be a politically stable configuration for the future.

Auckland is not New Zealand, but it is part of New Zealand. What is good for Auckland may not be good for New Zealand's rural heartlands, and this geographic diversity must be considered as a critical ingredient in New Zealand demographic future. The political dynamite that has broken apart rural and urban USA has to be avoided in New Zealand. We simply don't have enough capital to inflict injuries on ourselves the way the American Federal government can and still prosper.

Heartland values of rural, Pakeha New Zealand are absolutely central to New Zealand's social fabric: they do not have to be antagonistic to the plural fabric of New Zealand as a whole.

Thus, PROACTIVELY creating a national conversation that links Auckland to New Zealand heartland (and make no mistake about it, agriculture is still a major source of New Zealand's wealth), and tells a story of how we as a nation stand to benefit from the interdependence among our interconnected and diverse parts is most important, and should not be a partisan political project.

Attempts to maintain Ideological Homogeneity in the future will only lead to conflict, stagnation, and self-inflicted political injuries. So will the wholesale abandonment of Heartland values that are not simply socially conservative as has been narrated in the USA, but a source of Kiwi traditions that may enable the nation to ride the tides of globalisation with greater rather than lesser degrees of skill.

Discussion about the role of tangata whenua needs to go beyond the current grievance mode. Settling the Treaty violations in an equitable manner is a good first step, but including Maori people and culture as part of a broader national conversation in a more positive and inclusive manner is the next step for the future.

Demographically, Maori and Pasifika will grow by fertility rates relative to other ethnic groups. Developing this talent as a national resource rather than a liability is the other aspect of managing diversity that needs to complement wise immigration policies.

The funding of powerful iwi corporations as a consequence of Treaty settlements is an important part of the diversity fabric of New Zealand, but this needs to be complemented by more inclusivity and diversity in other sectors. Good policy to our neighbours in the Pacific is a central part of positioning New Zealand as a Pacific power in what has been called a Pacific Century.

Professor James Liu - Profile

Professor James H Liu describes himself as a "Chinese-American-New Zealander", who was born in Taiwan, grew up in the United States, and lives as a naturalised citizen in New Zealand. His research interests centre around culture and intergroup relations. He received a PhD in social psychology from UCLA in 1992 and has been teaching at Victoria University since 1994.

James is author of more than 100 journal articles, chapters, and books and is Professor of Psychology. His research specialization is on social representations of history, and how they provide resources and constraints for identity and intergroup relations.

James has examined the relationship between identity and history in New Zealand bicultural, Chinese and international contexts.