



Multi-Ethnic Council
PO Box 132
New Plymouth

Tēnā koe

I am writing to your organisation to seek your support to encourage participation in an essay contest, promoted by the Association of Former Members of Parliament of New Zealand, on a topic that will encourage understanding, promotion and participation of young people in our democratic process.

The essay contest is aimed at increasing young peoples' understanding of how our democracy works, by gaining knowledge about the structures of government, the legislative process, and the effects of this on our citizens and eventually those beyond our shores.

Our democracy does not exist in a vacuum. It works because enough New Zealanders want it to, and they work hard to make it happen in Parliament, in government departments, and amongst the public throughout the country in political parties and elsewhere.

With low and failing voter turn-outs at elections which places democracies at risk in some countries, it is important this does not happen in New Zealand. Transparent and open government is more likely to occur when more people participate in electing a government. New Zealand's voting participation at general elections is around 85%. However, it has fallen to as low as 32% in the USA and below 60% in Canada at times over the past few decades.

This essay contest is a serious attempt to engage and encourage young New Zealanders to see the relevance of these issues and as a consequence to promote our democratic, parliamentary and other institutions that are important in a free and democratic society.

The overall winner will receive a prize of a trip to Parliament for a day, including a Parliamentary Tour and visits to; the Prime Minister's office, the Leader of the Opposition's Office, the Parliamentary Library, the Select Committee Office, the Debating Chamber, Bellamy's restaurant for lunch, and a discussion with the President and members of the Association of Former Members of Parliament who will present a certificate and prize.

The subject matter for the 2011 Essay Contest is:-

- **How would you increase the understanding of participation of young people in our democracy?**

Essays will be judged on originality, creativity and substance, and should be no longer than 1500 words, typed on one side of each page. Please ensure your name, age, full contact details, and the name and address of your organisation is sent to:

Hon Mita Ririnui MP, Freepost Private Bag 18 888, Wellington, 6160 by 31 March 2011.

There will be a need to confine the number of entries from each youth organisation to three and your assistance in facilitating this would be greatly appreciated.

Please send the winning entries from your organisation to me to have them judged. The best essay I receive will be sent to the Association of Former Members of Parliament of New Zealand who will determine the New Zealand winning entry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require and further information by emailing my EA angela.bray@parliament.govt.nz or by calling (collect) 04 817 9519.

Nāku noa, na

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Ririnui', written over a horizontal line.

Hon Mita Ririnui
Labour List MP