

Proposal for consultation

Contributed by Lachlan
Sunday, 22 July 2007

Proposal for consultation by Counties Associations and other Organisations

Executive Summary

This paper supports the principles underpinning the draft consultation paper "Proposal for Consultation with Descendants of Chinese Early Settlers Who Paid the Poll Tax on an Appropriate Form of Reconciliation" - "Righting the Wrongs of the Past", V2 March 2002, but proposes a separate education process to ensure that:

- The consultation process will be more effective in providing the "target group" i.e. "the people who paid the poll tax and their descendants" with more time to learn about the poll tax, its origins, the intentions of Government and develop their views as to an appropriate form of reconciliation.
- The outcomes of the consultation process will be consensus driven and more robust.
- The overall process will be more acceptable to the target group; it acknowledges the integrity and standing of the Chinese as a community and will not be seen as a Government forced initiative on the Chinese community.
- It will demonstrate Government's sincerity and genuine goodwill toward the Chinese community in closing this sad chapter of New Zealand's history.
- The outcomes will provide a better foundation for New Zealanders to learn about the history and culture of the early Chinese settlers in New Zealand.

Preamble:

- The Tung Jung Association of New Zealand Inc, the Poon Fah Association of New Zealand Inc, and the Seyip Association of New Zealand Inc, are community organizations formed by the early Chinese settlers who paid the Poll Tax over 80 years ago. Members of these associations are direct descendants of the Chinese immigrants who paid the Poll Tax.

- Members of the Wellington Chinese Sports & Cultural Centre Inc and the Chinese Dragons Sports and Cultural Club Inc are also descendants of the original Chinese immigrants who paid the Poll Tax. Both of these Wellington-based organizations, with members throughout N.Z, were established some 25 years ago to meet the then changing sporting, social, and cultural needs of the younger Chinese community. The original reasons why they were founded remain today. They continue to provide a range of different activities for their members.

- Some 1st generation Chinese settlers who paid the poll tax are still living but membership of these five organisations are predominantly 2nd /3rd /4th and now 5th generation New Zealand born Chinese descendants.

- The committee representatives of these five Chinese community organizations are in regular and constant contact with their organizations and work with them at 'grass roots levels' either through social, sporting, or generally speaking 'community activities' which are at the center of the Chinese community e.g. Ching Ming, Chinese New Year, Moon Festivals, Chung Yueng, sports activities/practices, or sporting tournaments, funerals/weddings/birthday celebrations, and other activities such as organized bus tours, garden visits, weekly dance sessions, Yau Yih Yuen Chinese Pre-School, cultural group activities, community seminars on topics of interest.

- Through this regular and constant contact with their members - the committees and representatives of the five organisations can justifiably claim they are 'in touch' with their members which constitute the sector of the Chinese community predominantly made up of descendants of the early Chinese settlers who paid the poll tax.

- Any consultation process about the poll tax must include these people as of right. To not focus on the 'descendants of the early settlers who paid the poll tax and their families' as the 'target group' would be unacceptable to the Chinese community.

- Representatives of the five organizations are willing to work constructively with Government and its advisors, including individuals and organisations in the Chinese community with whom Government has already sought guidance, to successfully close this sad chapter in New Zealand's history.

Introduction:

- The principles in the draft consultation paper "Proposal for Consultation with Descendants of Chinese Early Settlers Who Paid the Poll Tax on an Appropriate Form of Reconciliation" - "Righting the Wrongs of the Past", V2 March 2002 are supported subject to the inclusion of a separate education process.

- As discussed at the meeting on Friday 5 April 2002 between representatives of the five organisations, officials from the Office of Ethnic Affairs and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, it is strongly recommended that the consultation process with the descendants of the early Chinese settlers will be more effectively managed and satisfactory outcomes arrived at if the overall process is undertaken and implemented over a longer

timeframe. The notes recorded by the officials from the Office of Ethnic Affairs of this meeting indicate considerable agreement between the parties who attended.

Proposal (three separate phases):

1 Community Education

1. The major purpose here is twofold - to inform the Chinese community of the range of issues involved with the poll tax and to allow more time to develop a consensus view of what form the reconciliation should take. Given the nature and characteristics of the Chinese community this educative process is not one that can be rushed. Community meetings would be held facilitated by local representatives of the Chinese communities, with the assistance of Government officials through providing information packages and resources.

2. How this is done must take into account the characteristics of the Chinese community as outlined in the paper tabled by Allen Chang at the meeting 5 April 2002, supported by Steven Young's paper 'Poll Tax Apology and Recommendation' paper, also tabled at the meeting. Whilst the content of these two papers is very brief, they identify some of the characteristics of the early Chinese that must be considered and as an integral part of this overall reconciliation process. Any consultation with Chinese must be in a culturally acceptable manner. There should be no repeat for instance of offending the descendants of the early Chinese settlers as happened when the Prime Minister apologised and her speech was translated into Mandarin. This showed a lack of planning and consultation. Papers attached.

3. Easily read and understood information in a variety of format needs to be developed (and managed by the Office of Ethnic Affairs), with comment and involvement from representatives of the early Chinese settlers. This

information should contain historical information such as the reasons why the poll tax was first introduced in 1881, its impact on families and communities, the background to the poll tax events e.g. the raising of the payment from ten pounds to one hundred pounds and the more recent events leading to the apology on February 12 2002, the underlying reasons why government chose to make the apology given the events of 1944, its significance to the international community and details on how to make written and verbal submissions with templates for use.

4. Facilitators from all areas/districts would be nominated or selected by the local Chinese communities within New Zealand to run these separate community education meetings. These people must possess the skills and ability to enable them to communicate with and have the confidence of their local communities to assist with the presentation of information and lead the community education (and consultation) meetings. These facilitators must be respected and have the confidence of Chinese elders. They need to be versed in the traditional Chinese customs and values and ideally be able to demonstrate a direct family link with the early Chinese settlers.

5. Where the Chinese community is 'small in number' facilitators from out of the local district may be required to lead these community education (and later consultation) meetings. The needs of the local communities will dictate the form of these meetings and the way in which the education process in that community is conducted.

6. The facilitators will need to be well briefed (and be consistent with each other) through being brought to a central venue (e.g. Wellington) or a central venue within a district (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch) as to:

- Ensure clarity of their role,
- Know the purpose of the meetings,
- Develop ways and means of approaching and achieving their specific tasks,

- Know what support and resources they would have available,
- Plan their time to complete this assignment

7. Translators who can speak the three Cantonese dialects of Seyip, Poon Yue, and Jung Sen may be needed to support and accompany the facilitators at community education meetings (and also the consultation meetings in the future). It cannot be assumed that all Chinese; particularly the older people will understand and speak English fluently. Nor can be it assumed that all English speaking facilitators can speak all or any of the Cantonese dialects.

8. Ideally all facilitators should attend the same briefing meeting in Wellington.

9. The facilitators - who should not be the same people, who organize and arrange the community education meetings, would report back to OEA and the local Chinese organisations with an evaluation and report of the meeting they facilitated. A single evaluation/report form for all facilitators to complete on how the information provided, format of the meetings was received, numbers attending, can be developed for this purpose.

10. Facilitators must emphasise and impress upon people attending these meetings that 'the first meeting is simply an information updating meeting', with the expectation that the Chinese community will continue their discussions outside of formal meetings that will eventually lead towards formulating either group, family, or individual views.

11. One of the functions of the facilitators will be to advise the Chinese community that meetings with officials will be held later to formally seek their views and feedback as to what would be considered as 'reconciliation'.

1. The second stage of the consultation process could then follow as set out in the draft paper "Proposal for Consultation with Descendants of Chinese Early Settlers Who Paid the Poll Tax on an Appropriate Form of Reconciliation" - "Righting the Wrongs of the Past", V2 March 2002 (but with changes to timelines, meeting procedures, advertising, organization, facilitators, recorders, interpreters, and outcomes).

2. An analysis of the outcomes and views presented at the local meetings will be made by a panel of nominated representatives of the 'target group' working with Government officials, and communicated to the Chinese community. Key themes can then be used as the basis of deciding what form of action the reconciliation could take.

3. When agreement has been reached at this stage of the consultation process the outcomes and recommendations be tabled and debated in Parliament to formalize the Prime Minister's Apology on 12 February 2002.

4. This formalisation in Parliament is necessary because the:

- Poll Tax Act 1881 was passed into law in Parliament,
- Action was taken to abolish the Poll Tax Act in Parliament in 1944, and it therefore follows that,
- The Apology given by the Prime Minister on February 12 2002 to the early Chinese settlers for 'the injustices caused to the Chinese community through the implementation of the Poll Tax Act 1881' should also be 'lawfully' formalised in Parliament - thus binding all political parties to the reconciliation process.

Note: This formalisation in Parliament would gain the respect of the Chinese

community and the wider New Zealand community. It would be a clear indication of Government's sincerity in making the apology to the people who paid the poll tax and their descendants.

3 Reconciliation

1. Implementation of the agreed outcomes can then commence, with a transparent timeline and requirement on all parties to meet these/their obligations.

2. A monitoring/supervisory group comprising representatives from the designated government agencies/departments and the 'target group' needs to be established for this purpose of ensuring action and results are achieved within the timeframes to be set.

3. This group would be subject to audit and report regularly to Government and the Chinese community on progress towards achieving the agreed outcomes.

Conclusion

1. Given that Government has confirmed again that:

- a consultation process will be implemented, and that

- it is not linked to dates surrounding a possible election (meeting 5 April 2002),

a relaxation of the timelines set out in the draft consultation paper

"Proposal for Consultation with Descendants of Chinese Early Settlers Who Paid the Poll Tax on an Appropriate Form of Reconciliation" - "Righting the

Wrongs of the Past", V2 March 2002, to include a community education process as a separate part of the overall process will allow time for more people to be educated and informed about the poll tax and ultimately this will provide a more sustainable solution to the poll tax issue.

2. The actions proposed in this paper preserve the "mana" of the Chinese as a people, by ensuring that they are given plenty of opportunity to have their say and not be told by others what the outcome is going to be.

3. Implementing this proposal from the five organisations will overcome the criticisms being made about the poll tax events of 2001; the lack of transparency, the lack of proper consultation and the indecent haste with which the process leading to the apology was undertaken.

Allen Chang

On behalf of the:

Tung Jung Association of NZ Inc

Seyip Association of NZ Inc

Poon Fah Association of NZ Inc

Wellington Chinese Sports and Cultural Centre Inc

Chinese Dragons Sports and Social Club Inc