

RAM SUBMISSION ON BROADCASTING ALLOCATION

I am making a submission about broadcasting allocations on behalf of RAM - Residents Action Movement.

While RAM has stood in Greater Auckland council elections in 2004 and 2007, this is the first time we have entered the parliamentary arena.

We are therefore novices at the parliamentary level of politics.

So our submission may, on the one hand, contain extraneous material, and on the other, miss out important points.

I would request your tolerance and lenience for any shortcomings caused by our inexperience in the parliamentary field.

If you feel that more and/or different information could be provided by RAM, please contact me and we will do our best to satisfy your wishes.

Now I will set out to talk to the different points you listed in your letter of 19 March 2008.

PREVIOUS PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT

The Broadcasting Act refers to a party's previous parliamentary support. Since RAM has not run for parliament before, this part cannot apply.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARTIES

The Act references any relationship that might exist between RAM and another party also standing for parliament. No such relationship exists, therefore this part does not apply.

OTHER INDICATIONS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

The Act asks for "any other indications of public support" for RAM, including "the results of public opinion polls and the number of persons who are members" of RAM.

Here RAM can provide some indicators:

1. While RAM could not feature in opinion polls because we were not standing for parliament until less than two months ago, we did gain large votes in Greater Auckland's last two council elections (2004 and 2007). RAM accepts that council elections have significantly different dynamics from parliamentary elections. However, votes in council elections are an important and measurable indicator of public support which I believe should be given due weight.

2. In 2004, RAM stood for only the Auckland Regional Council, fielding eight candidates for the 13-member ARC. RAM won a total of 87,000 votes. One RAM candidate was elected to the ARC. RAM's average vote for each of our ARC candidates was 10,871. In 2004 every one of the RAM candidates got their deposits returned because they gained more than 25% of the winner's votes.

3. In 2007, RAM stood for seven ARC seats, plus six Auckland City Council seats and six ACC community board posts. While RAM lost our ARC councillor, this was not due to any significant loss of support, but rather to the right-wing vote uniting behind one opposition ticket whereas in 2004 they had been badly split. RAM's average vote for each ARC candidate

in 2007 was 10,899, a marginal increase of 28 over our 2004 average. Our support held up despite 2007's general swing to the right which disadvantaged RAM as a broad left ticket. (An Auckland City Council comparison of the last two elections is not possible since RAM did not contest any ACC positions in 2004.) In 2007, like 2004, all of RAM's council and community board candidates got their deposits returned because they gained more than 25% of the winner's votes.

4. To sum up, RAM won 87,000 votes in the 2004 ARC election, and over 100,000 votes in the 2007 council elections which saw a slightly higher average vote for our ARC candidates as compared with 2004. This is a consistent story of significant public support for RAM in Greater Auckland over the last two council elections.

5. Until less than two months ago, RAM was a Greater Auckland council ticket. We were an informal network only with no financial members. In February 2008, RAM shifted towards becoming a registered political party eligible to contest the list vote in parliamentary elections. In this short space of time, RAM has gone from zero party members to 500. Going by our recruitment trajectory, RAM will reach 1,000 members within another month or less. I submit that the tempo and extent of this growth in RAM's membership is an indicator of support by a sizeable sector of the public.

FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLICISE POLICIES

The Act points to the need to provide a "fair opportunity" for RAM to convey our policies to the public through radio and television ads.

While RAM is a newly-emerging parliamentary party, our policies at the time of Greater Auckland's last two council elections were widely advertised. RAM erected 600 large "message only" billboards in 2004 and, three years later, 800 of the same type. The public were left in no doubt about what RAM stood for. The large votes cast for RAM in these two council elections indicate that our policies enjoy significant public support.

However, it is beyond RAM's resources to spread "message only" billboards throughout the entire country, or to deliver leaflets to every household in the land.

The only realistic way for RAM to get our message over to the public of New Zealand is through radio and television ads.

The interests of fairness would, I submit, be served best by a broadcasting allocation of sufficient size to facilitate RAM's shift from being well-supported in the Greater Auckland council arena to becoming well-known in the national parliamentary arena.

People everywhere in New Zealand should have the same opportunity to become familiar with RAM's policies as were the people of Greater Auckland during the last two council elections. This seems, in my judgement, to be a matter of political equity across the land.

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