

TE RUNANGA WHAKAWHANAUNGA I NGA HAHI O AOTEAROA

(MAORI COUNCIL OF CHURCHES)

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Secretary of Te Runanga Whakawhangaunga i Nga Hahi, Rob Cooper, today rejected suggestions that the call for Maori not to vote had failed. "Our networks tell us there is massive support throughout the Maori population, and especially from young Maori and Maori women. We remain confident, in fact we know, that the call not to vote and instead to sign the Tino Rangatiratanga Register is being heeded."

Mr Cooper labelled the result of a survey commissioned by former Secretary of Maori Affairs, Tamati Reedy "totally predictable. In fact we could have saved them a lot of time and money. Our monitoring makes it clear that Maori people over the age of 50 will continue to vote as they have in the past. There will be no increase in support for Mana Motuhake over previous elections. Maori women under 35 are clearly in favour of the 'Don't vote - Register' option. And almost all Maori under 24 are totally disinterested in the election."

However Mr Cooper warned against reading too much into the survey as it only polled people already on the electoral roll. "Those are the minority. Our concern is with the many thousands more who are not on the roll, who feel disillusioned with the current political system and are looking for an alternative. In a sample which is drawn only from registered voters, we consider 17% is an excellent show of support."

Mr Cooper welcomed the move by Dr Reedy. "Te Runanga is delighted that a former senior Maori public servant has engaged in the unprecedented action of polling Maori people. At last, some interest is being shown in Maori voters by politicians and their supporters within the political system." Since Te Runanga launched its campaign, politicians from all political parties had actively tried to win over Maori voters. "One of our secondary goals was to see all politicians, Maori and Pakeha, working for Maori votes instead of taking them ^{for} granted. It seems in that regard the campaign has already been a success."

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