



Kia ora koutou,

Unitec's ALLY Network has supported and participated in Auckland's Pride Parade since 2014.

As members of the ALLY Network, you are likely aware of the current debate over whether police should be permitted to march in the 2019 parade while wearing their official uniform.

Many corporate sponsors and participants have announced their withdrawal from the parade this week citing their belief that to exclude a group is contrary to the parade's core message of inclusion.

During the past six years of Unitec's ALLY Network we have not been neutral in the discussion of diversity and inclusion. We have acknowledged the needs of diverse gender people in a society where the gender norms create discrimination and power imbalances. We have taken action by creating the ALLY Network to identify what systems need to be changed in order to normalise diversity in our institution. We were the first tertiary provider to offer scholarships specifically for diverse gender students, we were one of the first to enact a Gender Affirmation policy to support staff and students transitioning whilst at Unitec, we have sponsored the Pride Parade and participated in it to voice our support.

Today we believe it is important to share with you our view and Unitec's current course of action in response to the debate around the 2019 Pride Parade.

To assist with this discussion, a summary of events as we understand them to have occurred is below:

- Auckland Pride's July 2018 AGM heard that not all the rainbow community felt represented by the Pride Board, particularly the diverse gender and people of colour members. Following a vote, several new members were appointed to the board
- The new board decided to arrange hui around the topic of the police inclusion in the 2019 Pride Parade as it had been an ongoing conversation since the parade restarted in 2013
- From the seven public hui, two key themes emerged: 1) strong support for police being in the parade; and 2) concern about police marching when reported rates of police abuse towards Māori and diverse gender folk had been increasing over the last six years
- The board considered how to hear these two voices and offered a compromise – that the police march but not in uniform. This was accepted by one side, but the Police did not agree and announced they would not participate in the parade
- Past Pride participants who believe that the police are being excluded have been publicly withdrawing their support from the parade (to date Police and the Defence Force plus several large corporates and one community group have advised they will not attend if the police are not marching)

- There has also been strong debate in the media with multiple perspectives and a call to acknowledge the power dynamics and find ways to include everyone
- An SGM (Special General Meeting) has been called for Auckland Pride on 6<sup>th</sup> December to discuss how to move forward

The Pride Parade began as a protest, seeking to bring meaningful change and we acknowledge there is a time this is both right and necessary.

However, it is our belief that the current situation could be best served by both parties returning to the table to seek a way forward which includes all voices in the Pride Parade. Engaging in conversation, seeking mediation and understanding honours the spirit of inclusion, and we believe is the most likely path to a positive resolution.

As things stand today this may seem like an unlikely outcome, but with more than two months until the parade we believe it is too soon to walk away and we encourage both sides of this debate to consider further mediation.

It is important to acknowledge that our decision is based on conversations within our team, with other members of the ALLY Network, and is informed by our own perspective and experiences. As an ALLY you are encouraged to look to your own experiences, beliefs and actions to form your own view.

Each of us needs to decide how we want to engage with this conversation (or not). Our hope is the above summary is useful to you in considering your own response.

You are welcome to contact Cathie Powell or Sonya Collie via [ally@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:ally@unitec.ac.nz) for further information or if you have any questions.

Nga Mihi Nui

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