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Tēnā koe Jono i ngā ahuatanga o te wa

I write with great concern about reported comments made by councillor Bruce Wilson at the 'Community Wellbeing Committee' meeting earlier this week. The fact that one of your councillors would deem to think it appropriate to recommend that Māori women should be sterilised as a supposed strategy to create a smokefree environment is absolutely appalling.

The connection between eugenics and racism; as evident in forced sterilisation of 'undesirable populations', is a shameful chapter of our world history. Victims of forced sterilisation in early 20th century America were the mentally ill and all non-Europeans. It was a practice formed out of the belief that one group of people (Anglo-Saxon) were intellectually superior and more evolved than another. That such a concept would be raised in Palmerston North in 2013 is most distressing.

The comments from Councillor Wilson have been widely debated following public reporting in the Manawatu Standard this morning. While Mr Wilson has made a personal apology to me, the damage extends more widely across social media, and as such I would recommend that Mr Wilson make a public retraction of his comments, forthwith. I understand he wants to express his regret at the next appropriate Council meeting but I believe the situation requires an immediate response.



The Government has very serious intentions in helping to promote the concept that we can achieve a smokefree Aotearoa by 2025. Publicity of this ilk is far from constructive for the smokefree cause, let alone the public reputation of the Council.

As a Māori woman, as a mother, grandmother and great grandmother, I have to say I was horrified at the comment made by Mr Wilson, and if it was intended as a joke I fail to see anything humorous in the notion of forced sterilisation of women.

Heoi anō

Tariana Turia

Hon Tariana Turia
Member of Parliament for Te Tai Hauāuru; Co-leader Māori Party