

**Submission
to the
Ministerial Advisory Group
on the
Holidays Act 2003**

21 August 2009



**The Republican Movement
of Aotearoa New Zealand**

Introduction

1. This is the submission of the Republican Movement of Aotearoa New Zealand (RMANZ) on the **Holidays Act 2003**.
2. This submission relates specifically to point 13 of the Ministerial Advisory Group's remit, the "Treatment of Public Holidays".
3. RMANZ believes New Zealand should become a republic. We are a network of New Zealanders who are working towards this goal. A growing number of New Zealanders support a republic. Two recent polls put support for a republic around 40%, while support for the monarchy has fallen below 50% of New Zealanders.
4. We make our submission specifically on the Queen's Birthday public holiday, which we feel should be replaced with a more relevant national celebration.

The Queen's Birthday

5. The Queen's Birthday public holiday is held on the first Monday of June. Her Majesty's actual birthday is April 21.
6. Traditionally in England the monarch's birthday was celebrated in June, because the weather was better at that time of year (being the Northern Hemisphere's summer).
7. However, the celebration has never been a public (or "Bank") holiday in England or Great Britain.
8. The only advent of note on the Queen's birthday in New Zealand is the Queen's Birthday honours.
9. In May 2009 RMANZ wrote to all of New Zealand's district and city Mayors. Not one indicated any celebration of the Queen's Birthday for the upcoming long weekend - instead, several announced they were holding celebrations for Matariki, the Maori New Year.
10. Potential replacements for Queen's Birthday include Matariki, a celebration of Sir Edmund Hillary's ascent of Mt Everest, or a Winter solstice holiday.
11. A recent members Bill by Rahui Katene MP to create a Matariki holiday was voted down by Parliament. The Bill sought to add an extra public holiday rather than replace an existing one. We believe in order for any such initiative to succeed, Queen's Birthday will have to be replaced.
12. Creating a new public holiday will be a reason for New Zealanders to celebrate their shared values.

Conclusion

13. RMANZ submits that the Ministerial Advisory Group ought to recommend that a replacement for Queen's Birthday is sought by Parliament. There are three strong contenders:

Matariki - Already celebrated throughout New Zealand. A cultural and astronomical event so can have meaning for all New Zealanders. It celebrates Maori cosmology. It is a winter festival. If celebrated in early July would spread public holidays more evenly across the year. Matariki can be celebrated as a weekend as it covers more than one day. Is a New Year's festival so would balance with New Year's honours list.

Ascent of Everest - May 29th. Commemorates an actual day, and there are no public holidays in May. Hillary was a respected figure and this began with his ascent of Everest. Would be a good day to honour notable New Zealanders.

Winter Solstice - a fixed day at the end of June (June 21st or June 22nd). Winter Solstice is an astronomical event so neutral in meaning. Celebrated around the world already as either the summer or winter solstice. A 'mid-winter' celebration. The holiday would remain in June but might not be a weekend holiday. Would spread the public holidays more evenly throughout the year.