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Group Claims Sport Northland Breached NZ Bill Of Rights

Thursday, 26 January 2023, 9:20 am
Press Release: [Stop Co-Governance](#)

Sport Northland, a community organisation funded by local and central government, has blocked a group from hiring a public venue, because of the political views they hold.

Julian Batchelor from 'Stop Co-Governance' said Sport Northland has acted unlawfully by breaching Section 21 of the Human Rights Act. Subsection 1(j) prevents discrimination on the grounds of political opinion.

On 19th January, Sport Northland's Stu Middleton, Spaces & Places Manager, emailed a concerned community group that: "Sport Northland have recently adjusted their trust deed to recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi and have changed their board structure to that of co-governance, due to these factors we have unfortunately have(sic) made the decision to decline your facility booking."

Julian Batchelor said, "Clearly, it is our views on co-governance that was given the reason for declining the hire.

This is exactly why he has set up the lobby group 'Stop Co-Governance'.

"It is one thing for Sport Northland to itself adopted a co-governance management approach. It is quite another to ban any group that does not agree with co-governance.

"Given the seriousness of this matter we have today made a formal complaint to the Human Rights Commission."

It's 2022 Annual Report states, "We have continued to develop our cultural knowledge and capability, furthering the progress achieved from past years. The journey of understanding and enacting our responsibilities under He Whakaputanga, the Te Tiriti o Waitangi articles and principles has continued through Tiriti training/education throughout the year, including a trip to Waitangi where we immersed ourselves as well as undertaking one of our strategic plan workshops. At the July board meeting, the board made the courageous decision to appoint us both as co-chairs for a 12 month trial. This was a result of the board realising that 50% board non-Māori/ Māori composition was really only a start of the cogovernance journey – and for true partnership we needed to venture into non-Māori/Māori leadership of the board. The result is a work-in-progress as we learn-on-the-job how to effectively co-chair the board. We realise there is no play-book for these roles so believe that effective communication, patience, reflection and the support of the rest of the board is critical in making it work. We have been fortunate to be part of the national sports governance community which is a great opportunity to network with other board chairs and develop our board leadership skills."

In 2022 Sport Northland received substantial ratepayer funding from the four local authorities in Northland (Kaipara, Far North, Whangarei, and the Northland Regional Council), substantial funding from its national body, and funding directly from the community via user charges.

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