

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL EXCHANGE COUNCIL

NINTH AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO NEW ZEALAND

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DELEGATION

Mr Noah Carroll (Australian Labor Party) **Delegation Leader**
State Secretary and Campaign Director, Victorian Division

Mr Anthony Baker (Australian Labor Party)
Chief of Staff to Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Federal Minister for Finance and Deregulation,
Senator for South Australia

Dr Sara Jane Shelton (Australian Labor Party)
Chief of Staff to Mr Michael Danby MP, Federal Member for Melbourne Ports

Senator Dean Smith (Liberal Party of Australia)
Senator for Western Australia

Mr Trent Hasson (Liberal Party of Australia)
Electorate Officer, Office of Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate,
Senator for Tasmania

Cr Cameron O'Neil (The Nationals)
Councillor, Maranoa Regional Council

Ms Suzy Domitrovic – Council Representative
Program Officer, Australian Political Exchange Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The members of the delegation represented the three major political parties: The Nationals, Liberal Party of Australia and the Australian Labor Party. The positions, histories and specific interests of each of the respective delegates varied sufficiently to ensure an always lively internal discussion on a particular issue, in addition to stimulating questions when meeting with our New Zealand hosts.

The broad topics of discussion consisted of local government, the three tiers of Australian government versus the relatively unified governmental layers of New Zealand, governing coalition dynamics, indigenous Maori rights and the nature and permanence of the current New Zealand electoral system.

As was frequently stated at the conclusion of many individual meetings, the experiences had during this delegation to New Zealand were both immensely informative and enjoyable for all participants. Equally, the chance to contrast and compare our New Zealand revelations with that of our own particular party or parliamentary experience and share that insight with our colleagues, added yet another layer of valuable reflection.

For the short period of time that the delegation experienced in-country, the itinerary provided an impressive degree of insight and exposure to the New Zealand economic, social, and more emphatically, the political overlays and structure of the country.

The principal finding of the trip was that although there are remarkable similarities between both Australia and New Zealand, the differences in political systems and culture were relatively large. Equally, the temporal nature in which the current New Zealand electoral system is currently viewed and, furthermore, communicated to the delegation throughout its meetings was particularly noteworthy. The description of both the electoral systems origins and its sense of permanence reveal something of a “trial” or “experimental” character. As such, it was generally considered a system that would have to be monitored, judged and potentially readjusted as required. The recent New Zealand adjustments to local government and its similarity with the Queensland model was another finding, containing many key distinctions also.

We would like to thank the Australian Political Exchange Council for the opportunity to participate in this highly worthwhile experience and commend it very highly for others in the future who may be fortunate enough to participate.

We would also like to sincerely thank those in New Zealand who took the time to meet and speak with us and assist our understanding of their wonderful, impressive and friendly country. In terms of resourcing and assistance, the program was well-paced, thorough and rigorous in the varied roles and the issues it allowed the delegation to explore. Of particular note was the outstanding support provided to the delegation by the Council Representative, Suzy Domitrovic. Ms Domitrovic always ensured that we were well-prepared for the events of the day. This was both in terms of providing detailed pre-briefings and assistance during the meeting itself. Thanks should also be extended to Ms Domitrovic’s counterpart in New Zealand, Mr Simon Pleasants, who always ensured flexibility in the program where additional opportunities presented themselves.

VISIT REPORT

Sunday, 26 August 2012 – Rotorua

Maori legend speaks of a demigod named Maui who used the jawbone of his ancestor baited with the blood from his nose as a fish hook to pull up the north island of New Zealand. This legend is somewhat geologically validated in the sense that New Zealand did in fact rise up from the ocean millions of years ago when it was part of the landmass of the southern hemisphere known as “Gondwana”. New Zealand currently sits between the boundary of the Indian, Australian and Pacific tectonic plates that move independently of each other and often with enormous force. These movements can sometimes cause amazing natural events such as mountain building, volcanic activity and earthquakes. In the last 150 years there have been earthquakes in Wellington (1855), Murchison (1929) and Napier (1931) which have resulted in marked land changes. As such, New Zealand is sometimes referred to as the “Shaky Isles”.

Our first site visit of the day, where we could personally experience such phenomena, was that of the Wai-O-Tapu Scenic Reserve. This Reserve was formed some 160,000 years ago and covers some 18 square kilometres. It forms the greatest surface area of thermal activity within the local Taupo volcanic zone. The Taupo volcanic zone is often acknowledged as the most active volcanic area in the world. Roughly 250 metres in length and between 30 and 80 kilometres wide, it basically follows a north-easterly direction. Within this zone are 17 major hydrothermal fields of which two contribute approximately five per cent of New Zealand’s entire energy supply.

The craters that form the reserve are very close to each other. They can be between five to as much as 50 metres in length and as much as 20 metres deep. There were three main types of thermal activity that we witnessed: steam fumaroles, sulphur vents and bubbling pools. The colours of these pools varied greatly, with purple apparently denoting manganese oxide, red/brown denoting iron oxide and yellow indicating sulphur. Some were very clear and others consisted of a blackish, boiling mud. The water temperature varied anywhere from 10 to 80 degrees celsius. The odour from the sulphur was very noticeable. Although we were subsequently informed by a local that one barely notices it when living there, we were unfortunately not in this category as visitors.

Waimangu

The Waimangu (translated as Blackwater) is an impressive and beautiful geothermal eco-system. It is apparently the youngest such eco-system and was created in 1886. It is the only such system created as a direct result of volcanic eruption. The Waimangu volcanic valley is also the home to a vast variety of unique plants with surprisingly little assistance from humans. Birds, wind and the result of volcanic eruptions in the valley are understood to be the source of the great botanic variety that the area enjoys. There are 58 different trees and shrubs, 56 ferns and fern allies and over 100 herbs to name only three of the varieties that can be found there. Equally the plant must contend with relatively warm temperature all year round, getting as high as 90 degrees celsius – although none of the plants aforementioned can exist in such extreme circumstances.

Te Whakarewarewarangaoteopetauaawahiao

Te Whakarewarewarangaoteopetauaawahiao or “The Gathering Place for the War Parties of Wahiao” was our next visit which sits alongside the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute. It is so named because Wahiao was a renowned figure to the people in the area and the Chief of the proud Maori tribe Ngati Wahiao. The site forms one of the last strongholds of the Wahiao as a fortified village and is now used for exhibition purposes for tourism in addition to contemporary uses by the local tribe.

The first type of structure that we examined was a pataka (store house). It was used to store important village items in addition to food. Such storehouses were quite common, we were told, in a number of coastal areas. We also examined in some detail the wharehau (meeting house) of the village. This formed the central point for community cultural interactions such as weddings, funerals and other important ceremonies of the tribe. To give an impression of the significance that such a

structure forms for the community, any carver that participates in the construction of such a dwelling has marked the pinnacle of their career. The whareniui is an impressive demonstration of some classic examples of the Ngati Porou (East Coast) style of carving. It is both sophisticated and impressive in detail and colour.

We also witnessed some traditional hunting methods used by the Maori such as a waka kereru (bird snare). In an attempt to snare the kereru which is a native wood pigeon, a feeding bath would be fashioned with snares or traps to capture them at an elevated level. The trough would be placed in a neighbouring tree to that of an acknowledged food source. It would contain water and once the bird had fed, its first instinct was to drink. As such it would pop over to the neighbouring tree, poke its head through the noose while taking a drink, and would generally be caught.

We also examined a hangi, which is the traditional Maori process of food being steam cooked by heated stones in an earth oven. The process consisted of heating stones until they turned white, at which point these rocks would be placed in a hole. The food was then placed on the hot rocks in baskets and covered with wet wrappings and dirt until no steam escaped. It would generally take up to three to four hours.

The carving school itself is very impressive and seeks to observe the principle of “Te Wanaga Whakario” or perpetual responsibility. It seeks to retain and teach traditional techniques which may otherwise have been lost to future generations by broadening those who can learn and practice carving and the sometimes restrictive cultural rules surrounding such work. The carving school allows visitors to witness works in progress and to speak with the carvers themselves in a direct manner. Some such practices are forbidden by other more traditional tribes according to a term known as tapu, which denotes the restrictions imposed by traditional customs and practices. We discovered that the preferred wood for the work is the native redwood called totara and that kokowait (red clay) mixed with shark liver oil are the two essential components for the beautiful red colours that are applied to much of the work.

The day was immensely helpful in receiving a very basic understanding of some of the traditional Maori culture that underpins so many considerations in New Zealand. It was both very enjoyable as well as educational.

The National Archives of New Zealand. Mr Donal Raethel, Senior Archivist and Tours Coordinator

The tour of the National Archives of New Zealand began in the bowels of its new building, six floors beneath the road. The stillness of the sizeable room was evident as we exited the lift into an area few had seen. It was fascinating to learn about the incredibly close ties between New Zealand and Australia. We read from the pages of the former Premier and later Governor General of New Zealand, Sir Godfrey Thomas, and the high life of the social elite of the then emerging colony. We also learnt of the importance that New Zealand placed on the debate of whether they should become part of the Commonwealth of Australia and to this day are, at a time of New Zealand’s choosing, able to do so. New Zealand played an active role through the period of 1896 – 1900 with a New Zealand delegate sent to the Australasian Federation League of New South Wales, the peak body in New South Wales for determining the Federation of Australia.

Our briefing also included the war diary of the 2nd ANZAC Army Corp General, which included confidential blueprints of the army’s attack plan, however gaps are found in the diary as the original plan did not play out as first thought.

Our next piece from the national archive was the *Economic Relationship of Australia and New Zealand (April – August 1979)* report. This piece of history noted that New Zealand was still trying to find its identity on the world stage. This was evident in communication between then New Zealand Prime Minister Rt Hon Robert Muldoon and New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia, HE Mr Laurie Francis. The delegation also learnt that personal privacy of documents is restricted to

anywhere between 10 – 100 years; no rules apply which is a marked difference to Australia's 30-year timeframe.

From the bowels of the National Archives we moved to its heavily constructed national archive vault, which is home to the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand and was signed on 6 February 1840 by Lieutenant Governor (and later the first Governor of New Zealand) Captain William Hobson, along with Maori chiefs from across the North island of New Zealand.

The original document is on display in the national vault under plated glass, which given its checkered journey, is needed. The Treaty has been through a fire and was saved by a government worker who threw it out a window. It also has notable pieces of it missing which have been put down to the mice and rats plagues throughout the period of 1887 to 1968.

Meeting with Treasury Officials: Mr Paul Rodway, Principal Advisor, Ms Nicola Kirkup, Senior Analyst and Mr Charlie Gillard, Analyst

As expected, the Prime Minister and his government rate the financial health of New Zealand as paramount to successful governing. The Treasury Department meets with the Prime Minister's Office once a month, post the meeting of the Treasury Department's Advisory Committee. This committee comprises 15 – 20 external experts from economists, philosophers, communication and financial journalists and provides overviews of the long-term fiscal sustainability of different areas and/or issues such as health, transport, agriculture etc. There is no private sector or corporate advisors on the Advisory Committee.

Questions to the officials centred on the future outlook of New Zealand in 2032. The ageing population is a major concern for the future of New Zealand and the financial impact on the government. However it was made clear that if the 'baby boomer' demographic was removed, there would still be major concerns with the future of New Zealand due to its residents' increasing reliance on government. Significant pressures are predicted to occur on the New Zealand health system with 80 per cent of New Zealanders using the public health system, which has triggered the current government to address the reliance of publicly funded services.

Agriculture is in incredibly good shape with the dairy industry one of the largest exporters. It is estimated that dairy contributes 2.8 per cent of New Zealand's GDP and over \$10 billion of New Zealand's export trade. Approximately 97 per cent of New Zealand's milk is processed into dairy with remaining 3 per cent solid on the domestic market.

The last topic in our Treasury briefing was superannuation in New Zealand and the introduction of Kiwi Saver. The pension is offered to persons 65 years and older and equates to 66 per cent of the average wage after tax. The pension is not means tested and therefore paid to the poorest to the wealthiest of New Zealand's over 65 demographic. History shows that New Zealand in general is not in favour of compulsory superannuation (like Australia) and politically neither major party is interested in addressing the need or perceived need to introduce it. Former National Party Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, abolished the compulsory superannuation scheme 16 days after winning government in 1975.

Kiwi Saver is the beginning of addressing this generational problem and potential burgeon (if left unaddressed). Political views on the rules around Kiwi Saver have been spilt but the majority want it means-tested as the current test is loose with it being persons over 50 who must have lived in New Zealand consecutively for a period of 10 or more years, and persons under 50 who must be a resident for six months and one day. Officials also shared that private superannuation companies across the globe are very eager for New Zealand to invoke a compulsory superannuation scheme.

Meeting with Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia Division: Mr Jeff Langley, Divisional Manager, Ms Belinda Brown, Deputy Director, Mr Ken Ryan and Ms Jocelyn Woodley

Officials from the Ministry stressed the importance that New Zealand places on the relationship it shares with Australia. Australia is New Zealand's most important relationship across all divisions of Government. Australia is New Zealand's largest export and import partner and destination and it is New Zealand's position to maintain and continually grow this market.

The Christchurch earthquake further cemented the reciprocal bond that both countries have for each other. Within hours after the earthquake had struck, Australia had offered assistance and within 72 hours, 450 Australian Police officers had arrived in Christchurch and were sworn in as New Zealand Police on the tarmac of the Christchurch International Airport.

The delegation was also briefed on the close economic relations of our two countries and this is bound by the Closer Economic Relations (CER) free trade agreement.

The defence and security relationship is equally important to New Zealand as it is to Australia. Our history of working together in protecting our nations is evident and as both our countries begin to withdraw our defence forces from Timor and Afghanistan, our countries look to continually work as a team.

We were also briefed on the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Agency (ANZTPA) and the joint initiative for regulating therapeutic goods. Overall the goal of this agency is to safeguard public health and safety while boosting the therapeutic industries in both countries.

The New Zealand Government is very appreciative of its inclusion in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meetings and the many committees New Zealand Ministers are part of. The New Zealand Government sees COAG as a fantastic avenue to advance its business. This involvement is deemed to be of greater benefit than one-off ministerial visits across the Tasman.

Each Ministerial Department of the New Zealand Government prides itself for having a strong working relationship with their Australian Government counterparts. Freedom of movement of our residents across the Tasman tends to, at times, cause some issues however it was noted that points of contention between our two countries are dealt with quickly and quietly. Our values and interests are almost always aligned but we tackle them differently and New Zealand believes that this individuality gives greater strength to our standings on the world stage.

National Party Representatives Mr Wayne Eagleson, Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's Office, Ms Paula Oliver, Deputy Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's Office, Ms Louise Upston MP, Junior Whip, Member for Taupo and Mr David Bennett MP, Chair, Transport and Relations Committee, Member for Hamilton East, Former New Zealand AusPol Delegate

Discussions included the Referendum in 1993 leading to the introduction of the MMP after a public awareness campaign including public meetings to inform rather than promote a particular view. The discussion included the composition of the current National Party government after receiving 47.3 per cent of the vote at the last election and the firm majority of one achieved through agreements with the ACT Party and the Maori Party to vote with the government for confidence motions and guarantee supply, but there is freedom for the Maori Party to vote on all other matters as it sees fit.

Also discussed was the current alcohol legislation. Caucus decided to allow a conscience vote following a Reducing Harm report, which contained 153 recommendations, a result of 7,000 submissions. The debate was due to occur on Thursday afternoon on whether to keep the drinking age at 18, have a split between the ability to purchase alcohol (age 20) and consume it at home (age 18) or to increase the drinking age to 20. Recommendations have been made in relation to price, advertising and age impacting on alcohol consumption, similar to the smoking debate. The Prime Minister's position is supportive of the 18/20 split. Other legislation before the House during

the delegation's visit included gay marriage, which will again be put to a conscience vote. There is a different consideration for List MPs versus Constituent MPs in exercising their conscience vote "who's conscience are you voting on?" The likely outcome for the vote was for the same sex marriage to pass the House.

Other topics of discussions included the state of the economy in relation to the high dollar impact and high commodity prices for dairy; international relationships held by the National Party and the United Kingdom; and Seabed and Foreshore legislation and the impact on the Maori Party voting with the Government.

Wednesday, 29 August 2012 – Wellington

This day consisted of a series of meetings where the delegation explored issues with the ACT Party (Mr John Banks MP), Green Party (Mr Ken Spagnolo MP, Ms Denise Roach MP, Ms Holly Walker MP) and the Maori Party (Mr Te Ururoa Flavell MP). The delegation also had the opportunity to observe and be guided through Question Time by Ms Debra Angus, Deputy Clerk, New Zealand House of Representatives.

ACT Party – Mr John Banks MP

Mr Banks spent some time describing his history, the profile of his Epsom electorate, the nature of his party and the agreement with the Government. He holds a balance of power position in the Parliament.

Mr Banks comes from a background in local government, as a two-term Mayor of Auckland. Before that he was a National Party Cabinet Minister from 1990 to 1996. He was elected the sole ACT MP in the November 2011 election to Epsom, an affluent suburb in eastern Auckland. Mr Banks is Chair of four Cabinet committees including State Sector reform, Expenditure and Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Intelligence and Security.

He regards MMP as a good system for ACT allowing the exploration and promotion of libertarian ideas that play to core constituencies in small business through promoting ideas around deregulation and tax reform.

Mr Banks also stressed the importance of the relationship between New Zealand and Australia and what additional reforms can be put in place to strengthen Closer Economic Relations (CER) in its 30th year.

Mr Banks thinks the MMP system is here to stay after receiving 58 per cent of the vote in the November 2011 referendum on the voting system. He does not believe that the review of MMP flowing out of the referendum will result in a change of the threshold parties should have to cross to qualify for an allocation of list seats in Parliament (from 5 per cent to 4 per cent).

On other policy issues, Mr Banks is very concerned about the impact of the outflow of New Zealanders to other countries, especially Australia, and thinks welfare and other reforms are necessary to stem this flow. Mr Banks wants more of a focus on wasteful spending in its own right and not necessarily funded off the back of asset sales.

Green Party – Mr Ken Spagnolo MP, Ms Denise Roach MP, Ms Holly Walker MP

The Green Party is very supportive of MMP and it as a success story that has increased the representative depth of the House. The party is interested in seeing the threshold for parties to qualify for an allocation of list seats drop from five per cent to four per cent. On election voting, the Green Party expressed concern that there does appear to be an increase in people not voting creeping up the age brackets.

On other issues, the Waitangi Tribunal has found the sale of electricity assets should be delayed while the Treaty partners negotiate a solution to the Maori interests in water. The Green Party is of the view that the Government should 'follow the process' in relation to negotiations.

The Green Party is alive to a possible agreement with the Labour Party after the next election to form government. Should such an eventuality occur, many issues would have to be worked through to determine the form of any such agreement.

The Green Party described its party conference as 'partially open' and said that the MMP list was voted on members though there could be small movements up or down the list after that vote of members.

Maori Party – Mr Te Ururoa Flavell MP

Mr Flavell spent a significant part of the meeting explaining the Waitangi Tribunal and the Government's claims process in relation to the sale of electricity assets. The Tribunal was established by legislation in 1975 and has 20 members appointed by the Governor-General. Approximately half the members are Maori. It sits as a permanent commission of inquiry charged with making recommendations of claims brought by Maori of alleged breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. Mr Flavell said the Government has committed to resolve all current and historical claims by 2040.

On electricity asset sales, the Government plans to sell up to 49 per cent of Mighty River Power, Genesis Energy and Meridian Energy. The Maori Council took a claim to the tribunal in which it said Maori had ownership rights over water and the sale of state owned assets would prevent them from seeking redress. The Tribunal found the sale should be delayed while the Treaty partners negotiate a solution to the Maori interests in water.

The Government's position and the specific wording of the Tribunal's decision, leads Mr Flavell to believe that the affected Iwi will decide to take the matter to Court. That is not something the Maori Party will determine of its own volition and every Iwi has a right to negotiate with the Government. Iwi fora are held three to four times a year and the Prime Minister attends to discuss matters of interest.

There are 22 Maori MPs, including three in the Maori party. In terms of party structure, there is a President and two co-Presidents, with a membership base of around 1,000.

The Maori Party has an agreement with the National Party government to guarantee the budget.

Ms Debra Angus – Deputy Clerk, House of Representatives, New Zealand Parliament

Ms Angus provided commentary on the processes and approaches of the Parliament while the group viewed Question Time.

There are a number of changes that have occurred in the House in recent years including the introduction of MMP which has increased its composition and diversity. Ms Angus sees MMP as here to stay.

The Speaker has also changed the dynamics in the House. He is insistent that the question asked be answered and actively intervenes to guide and direct the debate. The delegation observed that explanations from the Speaker are detailed, more detailed than in the Australian Parliament. This tends to 'take the heat out' and keep question time relatively constrained. The process of supplementary questions also allows a degree of follow-through on themes raised in answers to questions.

Wider use of technology has also changed the House. There is a continuous feed of question time and a note taker service for a blind MP. This fits with a fairly liberal attitude to the use of technology in the House. Members are issued with an iPad and an iPhone.

Ms Angus also gave us an insight into how a Wednesday operates in the House, which is Member's day. This is the day where Members' business is considered with Bills chosen by a ballot. Members can also indicate their voting intentions on-line.

Meeting with Community Advisory Services, Department of Internal Affairs: Ms Louise Cole, Manager Northern Operations, Ms Heather Rodger, Manager Regional Services for Auckland, North/West and Northland and Ms Shalano Bidel, Community Advisory Services

The meeting with the Community Advisory Services Managers aimed to provide delegates with an overview of services provided by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). The DIA manages 168 different nationalities that are largely Maori/Pacific Islander and increasingly Asian. The Department works with community organisations and focuses on connecting people to resources and knowledge to facilitate community development. The DIA administers the Lottery Grants Board funding to motivate and encourage grass roots community development in areas of high need.

The DIA collaborates with other government departments to deliver its programs based on the financial sustainability of the ideas. This section of the Department focuses on provision of services from a Maori perspective, for example, working with an Iwi in the North to identify their needs and the areas of the community that need help. The focus is grass roots up, rather than bureaucracy down based on social work that is not hand-out based which can tend to create dependency. The Department strives to provide a "hand up", rather than a "hand out" utilising community-based solutions.

Manurewa Marae Visit

The Manurewa Marae is open to all Iwi and international guests. It is a community development project that has been open for 35 years in South Auckland. It is a facility that is operated by a Board of Directors and is used as a learning environment for the local community. The Marae operates as a youth learning and development hub. It seeks to provide economic and personal development in the local area. The Marae has specific programs such as performing arts groups; youth community development programs; a Marae café called Marne Cafe; a horticultural plot maintained by the local community; and a health clinic providing traditional healing health services. The delegation visited the Marae Taehu (ancestral home and community hall) and the on-site healing centre.

Specifically, the delegation learnt about the Te Manu Ka Rewa project involving five community groups, one fund holder, the Auckland Communities Foundation, and local youth. The project links the Clendon Park Primary School with youth development and parental involvement. There is a performing arts group called Kapahaka; a project linked to the Manurewa Marlin's Rugby Team; parenting workshops; literacy workshops; children's holiday workshops; and a youth leaders program. The projects are supported by two community development workers. The Marae will be seeking to become an accredited tourism venue and a tertiary education hub.

Auckland City Council Visit Councillor Richard Northey, Councillor Conor Roberts, Mr Grant Taylor, Governance Manager, Ms Tara Pradhan, Manager International Relations and Ms Charlotte Kelly, International Relations

The Royal Commission into the local government structure recommended one unity Council for Auckland. The council has 1.5 million constituents. There are 20 councillors, a Council CEO, seven subsidiary bodies and local board services. The Council term is three years and the voting is non-compulsory with a 36 per cent to 37 per cent turnout. Council turnover is \$4 million and it employs 18 staff.

The Auckland Council is actively engaged in a future investment plan requiring private sector investment; development of inner city rail and including an economic development plan; the development of Auckland's Waterfront and leading the way as a multicultural city. There is a plan to develop sunrise industries in Auckland by encouraging seven industries including food and beverage, IT, marine and financial services by attracting and retaining entrepreneurs.