

## Submission to the Justice Committee

### Local Electoral Matters Bill

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22 June 2018

1. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum thanks the Justice Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Local Electoral Matters Bill.
2. Representatives of the Forum wish to appear before the Committee to speak to our submission, preferably by teleconference.

### Background and context

3. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum comprises the Mayors of the ten territorial local authorities in Canterbury and the Chair of the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury), supported by our Chief Executives. The purpose of the Forum is to promote collaboration across the region and increase the effectiveness of local government in meeting the needs of Canterbury's communities.
4. All Canterbury councils actively participate in the Forum: the Kaikōura, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn, Ashburton, Timaru, Mackenzie, Waimate and Waitaki District Councils, the Christchurch City Council and the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury).
5. The Mayoral Forum leads development and implementation of the Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy (CREDS). A three-year work programme to deliver on commitments made in the Canterbury Local Authorities' Triennial Agreement 2017–19 is implemented by the Canterbury Chief Executives Forum, and the Canterbury Policy, Operations, and Corporate Forums.
6. The following submission has been developed with input from the Policy Forum, and we have shared our draft submission with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Our submission focuses on matters of general agreement between the members of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum. We note that the Christchurch City Council and Selwyn District Council also intend to make individual submissions.
7. The Forum notes that the Society of Local Government Managers has submitted on the Bill. The Forum affirms this submission made on behalf of the local government sector.

### *Mayors standing together for Canterbury.*

Secretariat, E: [secretariat@canterburymayors.org.nz](mailto:secretariat@canterburymayors.org.nz) W: [www.canterburymayors.org.nz](http://www.canterburymayors.org.nz)  
C/- Environment Canterbury, PO Box 345, Christchurch 8140 T: 03 345 9323

## **General comment**

8. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum welcomes this omnibus bill amending the Local Electoral Act 2001 and the Electoral Act 1993 to:
  - support the conduct of trials of novel voting methods (such as online voting)
  - enable local authorities to utilise date of birth information
  - allow for analysis of voter participation in local elections (including trials) to utilise age group information.
9. The Forum would also recommend that the Justice Committee consider expanding the provisions for analysis of voter participation in local elections (including trials) to utilise other demographic indicators alongside age group information.

## **Trials of novel voting methods**

10. We welcome the amendments to the Electoral Act to allow local authorities to trial novel voting methods with a specified class of elector. The ability to trial a novel voting method provides for a low-risk way to test the method's effectiveness for wider use.
11. We note that one of the barriers to conducting elections with novel methods, such as online voting, has been the lack of regulations outlining the parameters of how such an election should be conducted.
12. An online solution is likely to be a necessary option in the future as use of postal services declines and our communities become more digitally connected. Online voting would also enable easier access to certain groups (such as overseas or visually-impaired voters) and assist in increasing voter turnout.
13. We hope that these amendments will lead to trials among local authorities to inform the creation of such regulations, allowing for novel voting methods, particularly online voting.

## **Access to date of birth information**

14. Access to date of birth information from the electoral roll by local authorities is also welcomed. Date of birth information is a unique identifier that can be used alongside other information to help identify that a voter is genuine. Ensuring that votes received are legitimate is vital to conducting robust and proper elections for any local authority.
15. We are also comfortable with the proposed requirements of local authorities to ensure security of voter information. To maintain and increase participation on local body elections, voters must be able to feel their information is secure.

## **Access to age group information**

16. We welcome the amendments to the Electoral Act to allow local authorities to access age-group information from the electoral roll for research purposes.
17. Allowing local authorities to use age group information, particularly alongside trials of novel voting methods, will support local authorities to encourage increased voter participation and evaluate trials of novel voting methods.

18. We would also welcome expanding these provisions to include other key demographic indicators, such as Māori descent. This would support targeting of demographics to increase overall voter turnout.

## Recommendations

19. The Forum supports:

- amendments to trial novel voting methods with specific classes of electors
- amendments to allow local authorities to access date of birth information from the electoral roll
- additional amendments to allow local authorities to access other demographic indicators available from the electoral roll for the purposes of research.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lianne Dalziel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop for the letter 'D'. A long, sweeping underline extends from the end of the signature across the width of the text.

Lianne Dalziel  
Mayor, Christchurch City  
Chair, Canterbury Mayoral Forum