



10 October 2023

Committee Secretariat
Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Via email to: ju@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou,

Electoral (Lowering Voting Age for Local Elections and Polls) Legislation Bill

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Electoral (Lowering Voting Age for Local Elections and Polls) Legislation Bill. LGNZ's vision is for Aotearoa New Zealand to be the most active and inclusive local democracy in the world, so we're interested in thinking about ways to strengthen local democracy and increase participation. A shift to a four-year term and changes aimed at increasing democratic participation and engagement generally are key to strengthening democracy.

Lowering the voting age to 16-years-old for local government is one potential way to increase participation. However, our members have diverse views on the appropriateness of lowering the voting age for local government, and the age of eligibility to be a candidate. If the voting age was to be lowered, we've heard many of our members say it would need to sit alongside introducing and investing in civics education. If the voting age was 16, most young people would still be at school, making civics education more immediately relevant. This could also provide opportunities for the voting process to be embedded into the curriculum.

Lowering the voting age is also one of a raft of recommendations proposed in the Future for Local Government Panel's report. As part of our wider campaign to push decision-makers to Choose Localism, our members are working towards developing a position on the Panel's package of recommendations in a bid to drive a future by local government. Because of our members' diverse views, we think it's more appropriate to consider changes to the voting age as part of a wider package of changes to the electoral system. This would mean considering it alongside, say, a shift to a four-year term.

LGNZ also sees maintaining consistency between general elections and local government elections as highly desirable. This bill would result in two different voting ages, which could lead to voter confusion.



If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact Simon Randall, Policy and Advocacy Manager – simon.randall@lgnz.co.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SB', written over a horizontal line.

Mayor Sam Broughton
President
Local Government New Zealand