

Inquiry into the 2023 General Election

April 2024



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the 2023 General Election. Robust and accessible elections are the bedrock of a stable and flourishing society, and we welcome changes to move the dial towards this being achieved.

Our main points are:

Item One – Day-of enrolment is critical to ensure maximum accessibility to the franchise.

Item Two – Eligibility to the franchise should be extended to those aged sixteen and above.

Item Three – Manifestos should be an eligibility requirement for inclusion on the ballot.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

We raise the following points and recommendations for consideration:

Item One – Day-of enrolment is critical to ensure maximum accessibility to the franchise.

Maximum accessibility to voting is critical to ensure a fair and democratic election. To this end, we strongly support day-of election enrolment to ensure that people who are time- and transport-limited can still participate in the democratic process.

Recommendation One: We strongly support the retention of day-of enrolment to vote in future elections.

Item Two – Eligibility to the franchise should be extended to those aged sixteen and above.

Every argument against the reduction of the voting age is rooted in anti-child ageist sentimentality and does not bear up to scrutiny. The same accusations of insufficient education, immaturity and lack of life experience could similarly be applied to many over the age of 18. Young people are just as likely to be influenced by their parents, teachers, and peers as anyone else, and despite the similar contexts we do not bar university students from voting. In 2022, 16 and 17 year olds paid \$92 million in taxes, which they have no say in the spending of. The Bill of Rights states that from the age of 16 you cannot be discriminated against based on age, but our voting age remains placed to ignore this.

Recommendation Two: We strongly support the reduction of the voting age to sixteen years old.

Item Three - Manifestos should be an eligibility requirement for inclusion on the ballot..

A manifesto of policy is the bedrock upon which a political party and their campaign can and should be built. An election is an opportunity for a party to share their priorities in the form of a manifesto, and should their priorities align with public sentiment they can be elected. Without a manifesto of policy, there is limited capacity for the public to accurately assess and compare parties to determine who they should vote for, and no form of accountability for the promises of a successful government. While policy was discussed and released throughout the campaign proceedings, no full manifesto of policy was released in a single document for three of the political parties currently in government. Two parties released manifestos only after international voting had commenced. Only one party currently in government provided a manifesto to the public in advance of any form of voting, and with sufficient time to read and assess. We do not consider this to be in the spirit of fair, open and robust democracy. Without comprehensive summaries of policy, the public is forced to compare media releases and sound bites to make their choice when voting. We would support a requirement that any party that wishes to be eligible for inclusion on the ballot to provide a full manifesto of policy in advance of the opening of any voting.

Recommendation Proposal 3: We suggest the establishment of a manifesto requirement for political parties seeking eligibility to support robust, policy based democratic proceedings.

Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 230 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. We believe in working to achieve a just and compassionate society for all, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website www.nzccss.org.nz.

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