

Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill May 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 this amendment bill. We strongly challenge the kaupapa to reinstate the referendum requirements for Māori Wards, including those that have already been established. In addition, while we support the adjustment of statutory time frames to ensure higher rates of engagement with democratic proceedings, this is in direct opposition to the effect of the severely restricted time frame of this submission.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

Our main points are:

Item One – Cease the amendment process to the Local Electoral Act 2001 and Local Government Electoral Legislation Act 2023 as it relates to Māori Wards and Constituencies

Māori wards were established to create equitable representation in Local Government, supporting Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the right to tino rangatiratanga. We strongly support this representation at local government level and oppose the restrictions that this amendment would place upon Local Government. This amendment contains no restrictions for the establishment of other Wards and Boards (Rural, Community, etc), indicating that this legislation is racially motivated and in opposition to Crown responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Waitangi Tribunal found, as of May 2024, that this amendment would result in multiple breaches to Te Tiriti. In addition, Mayors and Chairs of Local Government from across the country have joined to state that they do not support this overreach by Central Government into Local proceedings.

Item Two – Prioritise democratic engagement consistently

We strongly support the proposed amendments that would allow the struggling postal service to ensure that postal voting is sustainable and supported. This support for engagement in the democratic process is heartening, but we find it concerning that this same sentiment of fair and open participation is not seen in this submission process. Opening a submission on a Friday and closing it the following Wednesday, providing less than four business days for response from the public, is not in the spirit of fair and open participation in the democratic process. We encourage this select committee to reconsider their approach to submission timeframes in the future.

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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