

Review of Standing Orders 2026



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

September 2025

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Review of Standing Orders. We would like to take this opportunity to address concerns regarding the current process for the use of urgency in passing legislation. Specifically, we would like to urge the committee to consider changes to the Standing Orders to ensure urgency is subject to greater scrutiny and is only exercised in instances which show clear demonstrable need.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

Changes to the Urgency process under the Standing Orders would ensure that this process is only used where clear need can be demonstrated.

While it is clear that there are times in which the urgency process has genuine uses, such as times of emergency or to pass time sensitive legislation, the current system allows bills to be passed under urgency with little assessment of the justification to do so. The seemingly excessive use of urgency is not limited to the government of the day and has been one of concern over consecutive governments. However, the recent increased use of this process has raised concerns regarding the risk of bypassing democratic scrutiny, limiting both public consultation and government accountability.

The current coalition government have passed 97 bills with stages completed under urgency of which 28 were passed into legislation without a select committee stage (New Zealand Parliament, Sept. 2025). Although there is a requirement under Standing Order [57/3] for the Government to explain the circumstances that warrant urgency, with the exception of matters considered under extraordinary urgency there is no requirement for assessment of the legitimacy of the need for urgency or approval of its use (New Zealand House of Representatives, 2023):

(3) There is no amendment or debate on the question, but the Minister must, on moving the motion, inform the House with some particularity of the circumstances that warrant the claim for urgency.

The current process in the Standing Orders places too much discretionary power in the hands of the Executive and jeopardises public trust in the legislative process by allowing legislation to be passed under urgency solely on the whim of the government of the day.

We strongly urge the Select Committee to recommend that the Standing Orders are updated to include additional checks and balances to ensure that governments aren't abusing the urgency process in an attempt to evade public scrutiny. We support the need for the Leader of the House to provide justification but believe that, except in instances of national emergency, there needs to be an assessment of whether this reason is truly justifiable.

Calls for changes to the urgency process as part of a Standing Orders review by the Law Foundation suggested that the Speaker should have a role in authorising the use of urgency, but this was previously rejected by the Select Committee as they believed it politicised the role of the Speaker (The New Zealand Law Foundation, 2010). As such we recommend appointing a cross-party panel or a non-

partisan individual to approve the use of urgency or similar process which does not risk politicising the role of the Speaker but still ensures that processes are introduced to ensure this power is not misused.

Recommendation: We recommend the Select Committee consider the implementation of a process to approve the use of urgency and ensure it is only utilised in times of actual need.

Ngā Tohutoro | References

New Zealand House of Representatives. (2023). *Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 2023*, SO 57(3). <https://www3.parliament.nz/en/pb/parliamentary-rules/standing-orders-2023-by-chapter/chapter-2-sittings-of-the-house/#c2.57>

New Zealand Parliament (Sept. 2025). Progress of legislation. <https://www3.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/progress-of-legislation/document/54HOOOCProgressLegislation1/progress-of-legislation>

The New Zealand Law Foundation. (2010). *Parliament rule changes follow study on Urgency*. The Law Foundation New Zealand. https://lawfoundation.org.nz/?page_id=1952

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 100 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. Our mission is to call forth a just and compassionate society for Aotearoa, 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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