

Inquiry into the 2025 Local Elections



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

February 2026

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback for the Inquiry into the 2025 Local Elections. NZCCSS received feedback through member organisations of people who were previously enrolled being unable to vote in the 2025 local elections despite reporting they had updated their enrolment details in the lead up to the election. NZCCSS supports an investigation into possible impacts on the 2025 Māori wards and constituencies referendum that these enrolment issues may have created. Additionally, we would support consideration for alternative means of communication from the Electoral Commission to reduce the likelihood of people being moved to the dormant roll.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

We raise the following points and recommendations for consideration:

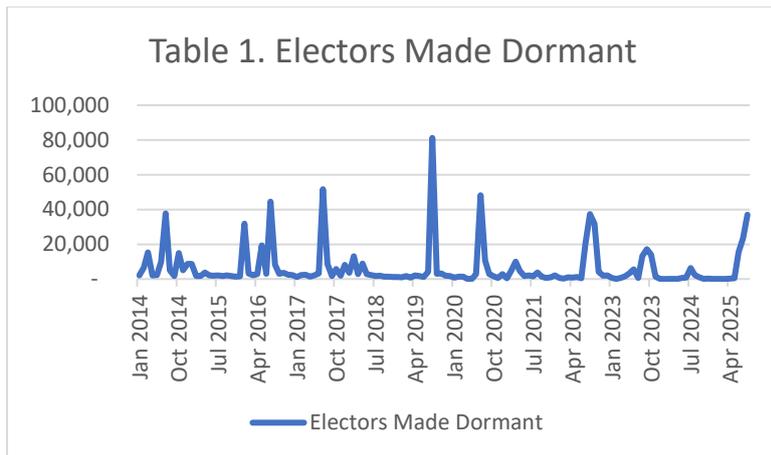
Item One: Enrolment issues in the lead up to the 2025 local elections may have impacted people's ability to vote in the Māori wards and constituencies referendum

As part of the 2025 local elections people were invited to vote on the Māori wards and constituencies referendum. With reports that people were no longer enrolled and unable to participate in these elections it is essential that the possible impact on the results of this referendum is investigated to ensure that the decision to remove these was not unfairly implemented.

Recommendation 1: We recommend an investigation into enrolment issues and the possible impact on the Māori wards and constituencies referendum.

Item Two: The current process for moving people to the dormant role prejudices people in transient housing and risks limiting people's democratic right to vote due to the mode of communication primarily used by the Electoral Commission

In the lead up to the 2025 local election, there was public outcry regarding people who believed they were voters and their details were up to date, finding that they were no longer enrolled to vote. Additionally, there were numerous stories reported about people finding they had been moved off the Māori electoral roll and placed on the general roll. The Electoral Commission advised that this was likely a result of people being moved to the dormant roll (RNZ, July 2025). Data from the Electoral Commission indicates that there was no greater increase in the number of people moved to the electoral roll compared with other local election years (Table 1).



Source: Electoral Commission. (August 2025). *Dormant and Ineligible Electors*. Electoral Commission OIA Request 2025/60.

However, it highlights a need for the process by which people are moved to the dormant roll to be investigated. Voters can be placed on the dormant roll due to mail from the Electoral Commission being returned as undeliverable, because they’ve moved and haven’t updated their address or haven’t voted in a recent election with their details unable to be confirmed. In a digital age, communication from the electoral commission still relies heavily on the postal system. Placing voters on the dormant roll who are unable to be contacted through the postal system unfairly prejudices those renting, experiencing homelessness or living transiently (Almeida, 2023). Following the 2023 General Election the Electoral Commission recommended increasing the use of alternative options for their communication expanding this to include the use of email or phone to help to encourage enrolment (Electoral Commission, 2024). While we strongly support the continued use of the postal service as a means of communication for those for whom it is most suited, expanding communication methods is likely to increase the chances that people update their enrolment details and are not moved to the dormant roll. Additionally, exploring opportunities for cross-agency data sharing, while respecting privacy considerations, may be an avenue for details updated through other government agencies to be shared with the Electoral Commission, reducing the risk that people are moved to the dormant roll.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the process for moving people to the dormant roll be investigated further with consideration of why people are being moved to the dormant roll and how changes to communication approaches could be made to reduce this.

Ngā Tohutoro | References

Almeida, R. (October 2023). *'Nobody knows where to go': Homeless struggling to enrol, vote in election*. RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/500043/nobody-knows-where-to-go-homeless-struggling-to-enrol-vote-in-election>

Electoral Commission. (2024). Report of the Electoral Commission on the 2023 General Election. <https://elections.nz/assets/2023-General-Election/Report-on-the-2023-General-Election.pdf>

Electoral Commission. (August 2025). *Dormant and Ineligible Electors*. Electoral Commission OIA Request 2025/60. <https://fyi.org.nz/request/32032-net-enroller-voters-moved-to-the-dormant-roll-by-year>

RNZ. (July 2025). *How to check your enrolment after concerns from voters*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/568580/how-to-check-your-enrolment-after-concerns-from-voters>

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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