

30 August 2022

Committee Secretariat
Governance and Administration Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

By email: ga@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou katoa,

DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL LEGISLATION BILL

1. The Dunedin City Council (DCC) appreciates the opportunity to submit on the Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill (the Bill).

Submission

2. The DCC supports the Government's proposal to improve the processes by which individuals and communities are represented through, and can participate in, local government elections.
3. Specifically, the DCC is supportive of provisions in the Bill that
 - encourage equitable representation for Māori in local government and guarantees that councils must consider Māori representation regularly.
 - strengthen the DCC's engagement process with local Māori and other community residents. Specifically, to make Māori engagement a first position when reviewing Māori representation in local government.
 - provides clarification for the Council when engaging with Māori and other communities on non-binding polls.
 - strengthen public confidence in the electoral process through the mandatory recount when election results are tied, or recounts are required. The alignment of urgent meetings and first council meetings accordingly also provides a greater level of public confidence in the electoral process.
 - amend Section 55 of the Local Electoral Act 2001. This will allow the electoral officer to approve the form candidates are able to lodge their nomination in. This will explicitly allow nominations to be received via electronic means or any means other than in writing. This amendment will reduce barriers for Dunedin residents to become involved in local government. Dunedin has a rural population of around 5% who currently rely on the rural postal service, which can add additional time for submission of nomination documents. This amendment offers more choice for Dunedin residents.

4. The DCC seeks clarity regarding the proposed Section 19GA(5)(a) which requires councils to engage with Māori and communities of interest "in accordance with Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002". Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 provides for two levels of engagement. The DCC submits that it supports amendments allowing local government to tailor their consultation approach. The DCC seeks clarity if the current wording of the Bill allows local authorities to tailor their engagement or requires a special consultative procedure.
5. The DCC acknowledges its Treaty of Waitangi responsibilities and is committed to working in partnership with Māori so they can participate in and contribute to decision making processes in the development of Dunedin.

Conclusion

6. The DCC is committed to improving the lives and wellbeing of the residents of Dunedin and ensuring access and equity in the democratic process. The DCC is pleased to submit in overall support of the bill.
7. The Mayor or delegate would like to speak to this Submission.

Kā mihi,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Hawkins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Aaron Hawkins

MAYOR OF DUNEDIN