

## **Local board recommendations on the Justice Committee Inquiry into the 2019 local elections and liquor licensing trust elections, and recent energy trust elections**

The following are the resolutions and submissions received from local boards at the time of printing the Governing Body agenda.

Additional submissions will be distributed before, or tabled at, the Governing Body meeting.

### **Resolutions passed by local boards**

#### **Albert-Eden Local Board**

The Albert-Eden Local Board:

- a) Notes with concern the low turnout in local body elections. Some stated reasons (from the Auckland Council draft submission) such as 'I didn't know anything about the candidates' are difficult to address, but 'I forgot' and 'I was away from home' are more amenable to solutions. The Board recommends:
  - That Auckland Council continue to explore the most effective means of reminding voters throughout the election period to return their ballots, by targeted as well as broad messages.
  - That the election period be timed to avoid school and university holidays.
  - That the Local Electoral Regulations 2001 be amended to allow for electronic transmission of voting documents to and from voters overseas in similar fashion to clause 45A in the Electoral Regulations 1996.
  - That the Local Electoral Act 2001 be amended to allow enrolment until the close of voting.
- b) Recommends that work be undertaken to achieve a consistent voting method for all types of local elections (health boards, local boards, council, licensing trusts).
- c) Notes that, according to the Electoral Commission, all NZ residents who are not required to leave the country by a certain date are eligible to vote. This includes several categories of residence visa other than the Permanent Resident visa. Electoral Commission and other materials use the term 'permanent resident', which is likely to cause confusion among residents who hold visas which allow them to remain in New Zealand indefinitely (and who are thus eligible to vote), but do not hold Permanent Resident visas. The Board recommends that publicity materials be revised to eliminate this confusion and communicate to all eligible residents that they are eligible to vote.
- d) Notes the success of the Auckland Council initiatives Vote Friday and One-Stop Shops. The One-Stop Shops were especially well attended, with reports of some locations running out of voting papers for some wards and local board areas. There

was also no regular One-Stop Shop in the Albert-Eden area (and only one pop-up location, at the Auckland Deaf Society in Balmoral, which was primarily promoted to the Deaf community.) The Board recommends:

- That Auckland Council continue to support the Vote Friday initiative.
  - That Auckland Council expand the One-Stop Shop service to more times and locations, and formalise these sites as voting booths with enrolment.
  - That Council sites (libraries, service centres and community centres) be used for One- Stop Shops/voting booths, as security can more easily be set up there.
  - That One-Stop Shops/voting booths be managed similarly to voting booths at general elections, with campaigning and party colours not allowed within 50 metres.
  - That Auckland Council ensure that ample voting papers are available at One-Stop Shops/voting booths, and implement procedures to enable quick delivery of more papers if they are needed.
- e) Recommends that further investigation be undertaken into giving responsibility for local elections to the Electoral Commission.
- f) Notes that security issues around online voting are at present insurmountable, and opposes online voting (with the exception of electronic transmission of voting documents to and from voters overseas, similarly to the practice in general elections).
- g) Recommends that local electoral advertising rules be aligned with general election advertising rules, including:
- aligning the definition of electoral advertising in the Local Electoral Act with that in the Electoral Act so that it covers all advertising that attempts to persuade people to vote or not to vote in a particular way.
  - regulating third party spending, registration and declarations similarly to the framework in the Electoral Act.
  - aligning local election provisions on anonymous, overseas and corporate donations with general election provisions.
- h) Notes that in many instances, a provision requiring vacancies arising within six months of an election to be filled by the next highest polling candidate is likely to cause substantial changes in the make-up of local boards or the Governing Body. The Albert-Eden Local Board recommends against such a provision for local elections, including for local boards, the Governing Body or the mayor.
- i) Recommends that the Local Electoral Regulations be amended to allow nominations and the associated profile statements to be submitted electronically.

## **Devonport-Takapuna Local Board**

That the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board:

- a) supports council's draft submission to the Justice Committee inquiry into the 2019 Local Elections and Liquor Licensing Trust Elections, and Recent Energy Trust Elections, in particular the concept of introducing a multi-modal approach to voting that is intended to improve voter turnout.
- b) recommends that council's submission request that the Justice Committee consider ways to reduce the barriers that may prevent a more diverse candidate base from participating in local body elections.

## **Howick Local Board**

That the Howick Local Board:

- a) supports the draft submission and notes the following:
  - i) that more innovative ways of encouraging voter turnout be explored, including a safe, secure online voting system.

## **Puketāpapa Local Board**

That the Puketāpapa Local Board:

- a) Support the use of a multi-modal approach to voting, noting that providing voters with multiple ways of voting may be the best way of responding to low voter turnout.
- b) Request further investigation into the Justice Committee's recommendation for the Electoral Commission to conduct local elections.
- c) Note that different communities need different types of support to help them engage in elections; recognising and responding to these needs should be a key task for the Electoral Commission if they are to increase their role in local elections.
- d) Request additional resourcing to proactively respond to issues of false or misleading advertising within political campaigns during local elections.
- e) Request that 'meet your local candidates' events be organised regionally (or nationally) in local board areas as a way of better informing constituents about local candidates.
- f) Support opportunities to inform communities of the role of locally elected members and of upcoming elections, such as providing:
  - i. election reminders at council events in the lead up to elections

- ii. information packs on local governance to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies
  - iii. information on elections and local governance in rate and water letters sent to rate payers.
- g) Note that some constituents may choose not to enrol to avoid possible jury summons on the assumption that providing their address automatically registers them for this possibility, or to avoid being found by an abusive person.

## Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board feedback on the Justice Committee's inquiry into the 2019 local elections and liquor licensing trust and recent energy trust elections

### Context

- Aotea Great Barrier Island lies 90km east of Auckland City in the Hauraki Gulf and is Auckland Council's most remote and isolated area.
- Over 60 per cent of the island is Department of Conservation (DoC) estate; 43 per cent of which is the Aotea Conservation Park.
- The island has a permanent population of 936 residents (2018 Census).
- Almost half (44 per cent) of households were one-person households; this is a high proportion when compared with the regional average of 19 per cent.
- There is no public transport and transport to and from the mainland is by either plane, a 35-minute flight one way, or by ferry a four-and-a-half-hour trip one way.
- The island has no reticulated power nor water.

### Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board feedback

Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board supports Auckland Council's submission on the Justice Committee's inquiry into the 2019 local elections and liquor licensing trust and recent energy trust elections.

The local board would like to note the following feedback:

1. We support the 'Localism' approach. We believe that elections are more effective when the local communications, local people and local 'character' are used. While we are supportive of investigations into an Electoral Commission to conduct the process of local elections, we would not want this aspect of localism to be lost.
2. Connectivity can be a challenge on the island with many black spots. We request that digital platforms for elections and communications remain as one method among a range of methods including print.
3. We support simplification of the voting documents to make voting easier including the same electoral system.
4. We support aligning the Local Electoral Act 2001 with the Local Government Act 2002 regarding the disclosure of candidates having serious criminal convictions.

# **Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board Submission: Inquiry into the 2019 Local Elections and Liquor Licensing Trust Elections, and recent Energy Trust Elections.**

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## **LOCAL BOARD POSITION**

1. The Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board supports in principle Auckland Council's submission to the Justice Committee inquiry into the 2019 Local Elections and Liquor Licensing Trust Elections, and recent Energy Trust Elections.

## **IN ADDITION, THE MĀNGERE-ŌTĀHUHU LOCAL BOARD:**

2. Requests a review to consider more relevant ways to engage with local board areas that received low voter turnout, less than 25%. In-person special voting at marae and local markets were well-received by the community during the 2019 local elections and the Board requests additional resourcing to support similar initiatives to make voting more accessible including enabling existing facilities to act as drop-in centres for voting papers.
3. Supports further investigation into voter participation trends based on the research conducted by Auckland Council over the past three local government elections.
4. Notes the current postal voting process and complexity of different voting systems can create additional barriers to voter participation, and:
  - a. Supports the exploration of a multi-modal approach to voting, providing options to make voting more accessible for the community, and continuing to investigate online voting options, considering technological advances and high personal device usage.
  - b. Supports the use of a consistent electoral system and the same order of names on voting documents.
5. Supports further investigation into the Electoral Commission being responsible for running all aspects of local elections and:

- a. Notes that while the concepts of subsidiarity and localism are key to effective local governance, these concepts do not apply in the same way to decision-making around the running of elections, where local governors may themselves be candidates.
  - b. Emphasises the importance of taking local community characteristics into consideration in the administration and design of local election processes and notes the potential for the electoral commission to carry this out, observing the existing localised presence of electoral commission staff.
  - c. Notes the possible benefits of centralising election administration in efficiency and for the experience of local voters including:
    - i. providing a permanent team focussed on elections, rather than Auckland Council bringing on teams of short-term staff to deliver the elections work programme every three-year cycle,
    - ii. allowing elections to sit with the same authority who maintains the electoral role, making room for centralised engagement and participation campaign efforts, and
    - iii. streamlining systems and processes across elections for the various levels of government, making voting processes simpler for the community.
  - d. Acknowledges potential challenges around representation review, candidate nomination, funding and localism, and requests options be explored in collaboration with Local Boards to mitigate these issues.
  - e. Calls for the agency responsible for local elections to formulate a localised engagement strategy to improve voter turnout, prompting more creative ways to engage and understand our communities.
  - f. Requests that Local Boards are included in considering the findings and ways forward from further investigation.
6. Values the appropriate of representation of communities across the region and supports the recommendation to amend the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 to allow Auckland Council's governing body the discretion to review its membership to reflect the growth experienced across our region.