

Hon Kieran McAnulty

Minister for Emergency Management
Minister of Local Government
Minister for Racing
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Rural Communities
Deputy Leader of the House



1 September 2023

Daran Ponter
Chair, Greater Wellington Regional Council
By email: daran.ponter@gw.govt.nz

cc. Chief Executive Nigel Corry
By email: Nigel.Corry@gw.govt.nz

Dear Daran,

On Wednesday 30 August the Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill received the Royal assent.

The Act improves the processes by which individuals and communities are represented through, and can participate in, local government elections. The key areas in the Act are:

- Establishing a fit-for-purpose process for councils to review their representation arrangements, including Māori representation;
- Improving governance flexibility at Auckland Council by:
 - Enabling Auckland Council to determine how many councillors it has, in the same way as all other councils; and
 - Simplifying the process for adjusting local board boundaries;
- Updating the processes for tied elections, including an automatic judicial recount before any coin toss; and
- Enabling all candidates to submit electronic nominations.

The requirement for councils to consider Māori representation as part of their representation review will come into force in October 2025 to allow councils time to meet the new requirements. This Act completes the Government's work programme to improve the local electoral legislative framework, which began with the removal of binding polls on Māori wards in 2021.

Remote participation is made permanent

The Act also makes permanent member attendance by audio link or audio-visual link at council meetings counting towards quorum.

This government responded to the unique circumstances presented by COVID-19 and Cyclone Gabrielle by allowing members who attended remotely to be counted towards quorum. The Act makes this change permanent and enables councils to manage remote participation through their standing orders.

The change will come into effect on 1 October 2024 when the temporary settings for severe weather allowances expire on 30 September 2024. Councils will have to amend their standing orders by 1 October 2024 to allow for remote participation, if that is what they want to do.

I would like to thank all those councils who submitted on the Bill and those councils who engaged in the pre-legislative policy development process to ensure it is workable for all. I would also like to thank Local Government New Zealand and Taituarā for their assistance on the Bill.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kieran McNulty', written in a cursive style.

Hon Kieran McNulty
Minister of Local Government

