

17 April 2025

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6160

**Re: Submission on the Term of Parliament (Enabling 4-year Term) Legislation Amendment Bill**

Tēnā koutou Justice Committee,

Kāpiti Coast District Council appreciates the opportunity to submit on the Term of Parliament (Enabling 4-year Term) Amendment Bill.

We wish to note **support** for extending the parliamentary term and agree that a binding referendum should be held on the matter. However, we:

- **Do not support** the proposed variable term which we believe introduces unnecessary complexity, making the referendum question confusing for voters.
- **Request** that the variable term mechanism is removed from the Bill and excluded from the referendum, and that the referendum question be a simple Yes/No question in support of extending the parliamentary term to four years, enshrined in legislation.

We also note the following points of concern:

- The Bill's proposed mechanism for a four-year parliamentary term is overly complex and may undermine Parliament's sovereignty.
- While Council supports extending the parliamentary electoral term, it opposes the proposal for a variable term based on select committee proportionality requirements.
- If the parliamentary term is extended, the local government electoral term should also be extended to four years. Failing to do so could create governance and practical challenges for both central and local government.
- As noted above, provisions relating to a variable term should be removed from the Bill and not included in the referendum.

Please find below our further detailed response to be considered as part of this submission.

## **1. In principle, we agree to extend the parliamentary term to four years**

1.1. The four year electoral term could provide stronger decision- and law- making by providing more time to develop, test and implement meaningful changes. This provides the opportunity to improve the overall quality of processes, and outcomes for New Zealanders. In particular it would encourage:

- a longer-term view to strategic policy making,
- more measured consultation supporting public buy-in,
- more certainty for responding to changes in funding and investment priorities, and
- potentially better cross party agreement providing for longer-term horizons to policy and reforms.

1.2. It may also provide cost-savings as fewer elections would be called overtime (although this may be countered by more by-elections).

## **2. Proposal for a variable term could have constitutional and practical issues**

2.1. The Bill's proposal for a variable term based on the proportionality requirements of select committee membership at the start of the term raises concerns regarding democratic transparency and practicality by:

- creating uncertainty for voters,
- undermining democratic accountability and Parliament's legitimacy,
- conflicting with long-standing legal and constitutional principles,
- encroaching on the House of Representatives' authority to control its operations.

2.2. Without additional checks, such as a written constitution or bicameral system, the term should remain set by legislation, not by select committee proportionality or any non-legislative mechanism.

## **3. Extend both the central and local government terms at the same time**

3.1. The benefits of extending the parliamentary term, as outlined in the Bill, are equally applicable to local government. Aligning both to four-year terms is a logical step. Local Government New Zealand's Electoral Reform Working Group has proposed this change, with elections spaced two years apart, to foster better working relationships between councils and Parliament.

3.2. Aligning central and local government terms would enhance opportunity to align policy, funding and project decisions across the two sectors including for instance with National Policy Statements on Transport, National Land Transport and Public Transport plans, regional plans, and council planning and investment in this area.

3.3. Any processes currently tied to the three-year term, such as Long-Term Plans, Regional Transport Plans, Governance Statements, Triennial Agreements, and Representation Reviews, would need to transition to four- or eight-year cycles. This can be addressed through separate legislative amendments.

Finally, we note that Council supports the submission and points provided by Local Government New Zealand.

## Conclusion

We thank the Justice Committee for considering our submission and support the principle of extending the parliamentary term, and we are happy to discuss our submission if there is an opportunity to do so.

Nāku, nā



Janet Holborow

**Mayor of Kāpiti Coast District Council**  
**Koromatua o te Kaunihera a Rohe o Kāpiti**



Darren Edwards

**Chief Executive | Te Tumuaki Rangatira**