



MEDIA RELEASE

Kids Voting makes the difference

For immediate release on 26 November 2008

A very different government may have been sworn in this week had the election been decided by the votes of over 13,000 school students who took part in **Kids Voting 2008**, a simulated election held alongside the 2008 general election.

Results from the nation-wide students' election have been tallied. National won the most party votes with 28 per cent of the vote and 36 seats. They were followed by Labour with 25 per cent of the vote and 32 seats. The Bill and Ben Party, The Greens and Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party also captured young people's interest.

The Kids Voting results would have created a Parliament with only 107 MPs - an 'underhang' - because while Bill and Ben earned enough votes for 15 seats, they only had two names on their party list. A party cannot add people to its list after the election so the 13 underhang seats would remain empty. The Kids Voting results would also have seen New Zealand First back in Parliament, after winning the Tāmaki electorate.

The 13,079 students were participating in Kids Voting, a New Zealand Post-sponsored project to give students a taste and experience of the election with the aims of helping prepare them for their voting futures, and raise awareness and commitment to the 2008 election among parents and older siblings.

"Feedback from participating teachers has emphasised the value of the 'authentic voting experience' Kids Voting gave students and the insight into what it's actually like to participate in the democratic process," says Dr Helena Catt, Electoral Commission chief executive. "This makes it more likely they will enrol and vote in the real thing in coming years. We see Kids Voting as an important tool to help arrest declining turnout for elections."

Teachers used the programme as a focus for learning about the importance of voting and elections along with New Zealand's democracy and their own participation in it. Students studied political parties and their policies, analysed media coverage and learned about the political system in New Zealand and other countries. They then took on responsibility for running the Kids Voting polling booth as well as casting their own votes.

Kids Voting for the 2008 election followed its successful launch for last year's local government elections where 8,000 children experienced the chance to vote for their

mayors and councillors. The Kids Voting programme will run every year and continue to raise awareness among young people about New Zealand's electoral processes.

Victoria Owen, co-ordinator of Kids Voting at Local Government New Zealand, says the support received from New Zealand Post meant the programme would continue. "We are very grateful that New Zealand Post sees the long term benefits of this project as a way of demystifying the voting process and building active citizens."

New Zealand Post Chief Executive John Allen said the company is closely associated with elections through the Electoral Enrolment Centre, and its nation-wide team of Registrars of Electors, which is responsible for ensuring as many eligible electors as possible are enrolled to vote in Parliamentary, local council and district health board elections, by-elections, referenda and polls.

"Kids Voting is a way to encourage young people to enrol when they do become eligible by giving them an early understanding of the process. It has a long term positive impact and fits well with our overall vision of 'people connecting people'."

ENDS

Local Government New Zealand is the national voice of local government in New Zealand. Kids Voting is part of the Growing Active Citizens project, co-ordinated by Local Government New Zealand with support from a range of central and local government partners. The project aims to increase active participation in decision making locally, regionally and nationally by developing a range of resources to support citizenship education for young people in schools. Kids Voting is proudly supported by New Zealand Post.

Please email info@kidsvoting.org.nz if you would like an electronic copy of the Kids Voting results from each General and Maori electorate seat, or go to www.kidsvoting.org.nz. For any questions about Kids Voting contact Penny McLean on (04) 474 0678.

Kids Voting Results

PARTY VOTE

New Zealand National Party 28.4%
 New Zealand Labour Party 25%
 The Bill and Ben Party 11.7%
 The Greens 11.2%
 Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party 10.5%
 Māori Party 4.9%
 Act New Zealand 1.9%
 New Zealand First Party 1%
 United Future New Zealand 0.7%

PARTY SEAT ENTITLEMENT

New Zealand National Party 36
 New Zealand Labour Party 32
 The Bill and Ben Party 15
 The Greens 14
 Aotearoa Legalise Cannabis Party 13
 Māori Party 6
 Act New Zealand 2
 New Zealand First Party 1
 United Future New Zealand 1