

Growing Active Citizens

Increasing Understanding of Your Council
Enhancing Participation in Your Council
Building Stronger Communities with Your Council

Local Government New Zealand, together with a number of local and central government partners, has embarked on a long term project with the aim of "Growing Active Citizens". Over many years, Councils and schools have developed their own resources to support growing active citizens in their communities. These resources aim to provide individuals with the knowledge, understanding and confidence they need to participate effectively in democratic processes. This project will build on these existing resources to help New Zealand councils and schools support active citizenship and the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes.

What does the Growing Active Citizens project aim to achieve?

The long-term objective of this project is to increase active participation in local communities, local government, and other decision making processes. Starting young is important, as research indicates those who do not vote in their youth are less likely to vote in their later adult life. Similarly, those who vote early on continue to vote throughout their lives. There is good evidence that programs which foster future participation are those which give students an experience of participating in democratic systems.

The project will initially focus on developing resources for use in New Zealand schools. This material will help young people to understand how decisions are made in their communities and encourage their active engagement with local government. The project will also provide resources to support the engagement of councils with students, children and young people in their communities.

What has been achieved to date?

In October 2007, 83 schools and over 8,000 students took part in Kids Voting in conjunction with the local government elections. 43 city and district councils actively supported the initiative. Held nationally for the first time, Kids Voting was an opportunity for the voters and leaders of the future to understand the voting process. Feedback suggests that Kids Voting was successful in meeting its aim: *To raise awareness amongst young people about New Zealand's electoral processes and increase their personal understanding, belief and confidence in the system.* Kids Voting is being run again in 2008 for the Parliamentary elections. For more information, or to register, visit www.kidsvoting.org.nz

What resources are being developed?

Growing Active Citizens is currently finalizing a second resource for use by schools and councils: *Youth Citizens' Juries: A Guide to Setting up and Running a Youth Citizens' Jury.* Youth Juries provide a unique opportunity for young people to be included in decision-making and participate in the political processes of their community. The guide and associated DVD will support schools and councils to run this unique consultation and decision making process for young people in their area.

How can you be involved?

You can get involved and support this project in a number of ways:

- Councils and schools can work with one another to plan for Kids Voting in 2008
- Participate in the working group, or send us feedback, ideas and suggestions on the project, including initiatives that have worked well in your community
- Work with your local schools to your council or school as a pilot for future projects

For more information contact Victoria Owen- 04 924 1221, victoria.owen@lgnz.co.nz or visit www.lgnz.co.nz.



Local Government New Zealand

te pūtahi matakokiri

Growing Active Citizens is coordinated by *Local Government New Zealand*, in association with local and central government agencies, and educational institutions