

10 June 2022

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Via email to: [ju@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:ju@parliament.govt.nz)

Who's  
putting local  
issues on  
the national  
agenda?

**We are.  
LGNZ.**  
Te Kāhui Kaunihera o Aotearoa.

E te Komiti, tēnā koutou katoa

### **Local Electoral (Advertising) Amendment Bill**

LGNZ welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Local Electoral (Advertising) Amendment Bill.

The safety of elected members is of the utmost importance to LGNZ. So is attracting a broad and diverse range of candidates to stand in local body elections. Both these priorities align with our vision for Aotearoa to be the most active and inclusive local democracy in the world. That's why we've advocated strongly on behalf of councils to address concerns about personal safety by suggesting urgent changes to the law that requires candidates to publish their physical address on these advertisements. We're glad to see Government respond to this issue and strongly support the proposed changes.

Although there has been some criticism of the limited time for scrutiny of this Bill, we note the urgent passing of this Bill prior to the 2022 election campaign period beginning 15 July 2022 is crucial to ensure the changes take effect before this year's election period. Without these changes, we're concerned that a number of potential candidates may be deterred from standing due to fears for their personal safety, and the safety of those they live with.

Requiring candidates to include their physical address on election advertising has raised privacy and safety concerns for electoral candidates – particularly women, Māori, and people from multi-ethnic and other diverse communities. We're hearing about instances of aggression and bullying towards political candidates and elected members more frequently in our conversations with the sector and in media coverage. In a recent LGNZ survey of elected members, 49% of respondents had experienced racism or gender discrimination in their role, with 40% reporting they had experienced both. 44% of respondents had experienced harassment, prejudice, or threatening or derogatory behaviours, with 50% of those experiences happening in the community.

Ensuring candidates feel safe to stand is critical in local elections given the proximity of candidates to their communities. Local candidates live and work in the communities that they represent and do not have access to the same levels of support and security as parliamentary candidates. The proposed changes to the Local Electoral Act are one small but significant way to help ensure candidates feel safer and better supported to stand for local government.

While we understand the need for accountability and transparency – and that this comes with the privilege of being in public office – LGNZ is strongly of the view that the Bill strikes the right balance between this need and the need to ensure the safety of candidates and, ultimately, elected members.

While candidates may use a business address under the current legislation, many do not have access to one. The proposed changes will make it possible for candidates to provide other contact details, such as an email address or phone number, which means that candidates can still be contacted by their constituents. This will make standing for local government safer and more equitable.

As we've spoken to councils about the local government they want to see in the future, we've repeatedly heard that the sector wants to see a more diverse range of candidates standing for election. They also want to see a broader range of people actively participating in local democracy, having understood the value and role of local government in community wellbeing. The Bill is a positive step towards removing one of the barriers preventing a more diverse range of candidates from standing.

However, in addition to privacy, safety and harassment concerns, LGNZ is also keenly aware of other barriers that may prevent more people standing for local election. Current codes of conduct are ineffective and lack the accountability mechanisms needed to keep members safe within councils, with working conditions (including inconsistent policies towards childcare) and low remuneration being some of the other barriers. More work is needed in these areas, with some urgency.

LGNZ is undertaking its own programme of work to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in local government. This includes our Vote 22 campaign, which champions local government as a place for everyone in the lead-up to October's elections. The campaign focuses on getting people from a range of backgrounds and communities to both stand for local government and vote in the elections. These are two important levers to shifting the dial toward a more representative local democracy in Aotearoa.

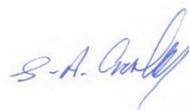
We look forward to the Local Electoral (Advertising) Amendment Bill being passed before this year's local body election campaign period starts.

If you would like to discuss this submission or LGNZ's work further, please feel free to contact Susan Freeman-Greene, Chief Executive at [susan.freeman-greene@lgnz.co.nz](mailto:susan.freeman-greene@lgnz.co.nz). We would like to speak to this submission if the opportunity is available.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Susan Freeman-Greene  
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Local Government New Zealand



Stuart Crosby  
**President**  
Local Government New Zealand