

Media Statement
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Infrastructure
New Zealand



Four-year Term Referendum Must Include Local Government

Infrastructure New Zealand and Local Government New Zealand are urging the Government to address electoral terms at all levels of government by putting a clear and unified question to the public – should New Zealand move both central and local government to fixed four-year electoral terms?

“Infrastructure New Zealand supports the shift to a four-year parliamentary term, but it must be accompanied by the same shift for local government,” says Infrastructure New Zealand Chief Executive Nick Leggett. “This is critical if we want alignment between the two tiers of government, and them to operate and collaborate effectively.”

“We believe there’s a strong case for alignment of council and parliamentary terms, and for national and local elections to be evenly spaced with elections biennially,” says LGNZ President Sam Broughton.

The current draft of the Term of Parliament (Enabling 4-year Term) Legislation Amendment Bill overcomplicates the debate over a four-year term by introducing conditions that allow governments to choose between three- and four-year terms depending on how select committee membership is allocated.

“Four-year terms for both central and local government would significantly benefit infrastructure by providing government with additional time for considered policy development and project delivery,” Leggett says. “It would also give greater certainty to the infrastructure sector and strengthen private investor confidence.”

“Last month the LGNZ Electoral Reform Working Group released its draft position paper, which recommended that both local and central government move to four-year electoral terms – with any upcoming poll covering both,” Broughton says. “A four-year term will support the country to be more efficient with infrastructure planning and delivery, basically doubling the number of effective governance years between elections.”

“The report also recommended that any move to four-year terms should include some form of enhanced accountability, as the key accountability measure of elections will apply less frequently.”

“While Infrastructure New Zealand supports greater scrutiny of government decision-making, having this determined at every election would create unnecessary uncertainty,” Leggett says. The Bill should simply be amended to provide for the proposed new select committee arrangements if the referendum proposal is accepted.”

“What’s needed is clarity.”

“We should ask New Zealanders one simple question at the referendum – do they support moving both central and local government to four-year terms, with elections held two years apart? That approach gives each level of government the focus it needs, reduces administrative strain, and ensures important local issues are not drowned out by national campaigns.”

“This Bill is a great opportunity to improve our system of government across all levels. Let’s make sure we get it right and give the public a say on a simple and enduring solution.”

ENDS

Contacts:

Nick Leggett
Chief Executive – Infrastructure New Zealand
021 248 2175

Sam Broughton
President – Local Government New Zealand
c/o James Craw 021 847 256