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Electoral Review Consultation
Independent Electoral Review
Email: secretariat@electoralreview.govt.nz

RURAL WOMEN NEW ZEALAND (INC) SUBMISSION

Electoral Review Interim Report Feedback

Introduction

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Independent Electoral Review (IER) Interim Report. As an organisation dedicated to strengthening, supporting, and connecting people and communities in rural and regional New Zealand, we are pleased to see the IER Panel noted our submission regarding voting in elections and removing barriers to participation.

Comments

1. Our comments are regarding recommendations in Chapter 9: Voting in Elections.

R28. Requiring advance voting to be provided for a minimum period of 12 days.

2. We support the lead in time and flexibility underlying the recommendation.

R32. Future-proofing special voting provisions ...

3. Election services must take account of the erratic nature of mail delivery throughout New Zealand to ensure postal voting is a truly effective method of receiving ballot papers.

4. While online voting is out of scope for this review, RWNZ recognises that digital or online voting is a potential tool for elections in the future. Any move to the provision of ballot papers via the internet will need to take account of connectivity issues (inconsistent coverage, reliability and capacity) for the rural sector.

5. Paragraph 9.30 refers to polling places offering 'reasonable access to anyone who wants to cast a vote in-person'. RWNZ suggests that there be a guide to what 'reasonable' covers (rather than a prescribed definition of what 'reasonable' is).
6. We believe 'reasonable' needs to recognise farming work commitments and travel time for those who live in rural communities when determining the location and open hours of polling places. Evening availability for in-person voting would be especially valuable for those who work irregular hours or undertake shift work.
7. This would also support 'equitable access to polling places' for enabling participation referred to in Paragraph 9.27. Equitable access also needs to recognise the limited availability of public transport in rural areas compared to urban locations.

R37. Extending the time available for any electoral processes or deadlines where they are disrupted by an unforeseen or unavoidable disruption

8. With regard to emergencies and disruption, we learned from the recent extreme weather events that communities are impacted differently and may require different local solutions appropriate for their particular situation/region.
9. Electoral processes or deadlines should provide flexibility for different levels of service in different regions so communities that may be cut-off during the election period are not prevented from participation by a 'one size fits all' extension.
10. The extension time needs to be sufficient for the best/most appropriate solution to be found and applied.

Thank you again for the opportunity to engage with the IER Panel and your attention to the issues we raised during the consultation process.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Gabrielle O'Brien
Chief Executive

About Rural Women New Zealand

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities and has an authoritative voice on rural environment, health, education, technology, business and social issues.

RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural residents, workers and families have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development.

RWNZ is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World and as such upholds all United Nations, International Labor Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Health Organisation (WHO) conventions and outcome statements as they relate to women and rural women in particular.