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Local Body Elections Inquiry
Justice Select Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

RURAL WOMEN NEW ZEALAND (INC) SUBMISSION

Inquiry into the Local Body Elections 2022

Introduction

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Justice Select Committee on its inquiry into the 2022 local body elections.

Comments

1. RWNZ has no comments on the matters of low voter turnout and the age of eligible voters.
2. Regarding the provision of election services, we have focused on drawing attention to two key areas of concern for rural communities: provision of ballot papers and postal voting.

Provision of ballot papers

3. 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 for the rural sector.
4. Internet and Mobile coverage, reliability and capacity is not consistent across the country. This inconsistency puts people in regional areas at a disadvantage, particularly where it limits (and potentially discourages) their participation.

Postal voting

5. Many of our members have experience of difficulties with relying on the postal service to receive important documents when there are time constraints. Rural deliveries have generally become much less frequent and in some areas have ceased altogether, necessitating a trip to town to collect mail.
6. Election services therefore need to 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this inquiry. We look forward to reviewing the resulting report and recommendations.

About Rural Women New Zealand

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities to provide a credible and respected 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.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Gabrielle O'Brien
Chief Executive