

13 January 2011

File No: 3-EL-1

Committee Secretariat  
Justice and Electoral  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6300

Tena koe

### **Inquiry into the 2010 Local Government Elections**

This is Rangitikei District Council's submission in regards to the Inquiry into the 2010 Local Government Elections and is centred around the requirement to go through a by-election process when there are insufficient nominations, and low voter turn-out.

#### **By-elections**

For the second consecutive local government election, a by-election was needed to fill a vacancy on a community board. The by-election process is expensive and lengthy, and places extraordinary financial burden on ratepayers. Moreover, there is a requirement to wait until after the election has been conducted to do this. A preferred option would be to re-open the call for nominations for another defined period for that vacancy (an extra week). This forgoes the requirement to have electoral rolls updated and republished at a later date and captures current public interest.

#### **National publicity campaign**

During the 2010 Local government Elections, Rangitikei District experienced lower voter turn-out than previous years. While it is difficult to pin point the exact reason for this as factors such as there being no election for the Mayoralty in the Rangitikei, there was a noticeable lack of a national campaign promoting the 2010 elections – both encouraging nominations and voter encouragement.

While the Mayoralty was uncontested in the Rangitikei and this could have contributed to the low voter turnout experienced in the 2010 local government elections, the lack of an effective national marketing campaign promoting the local government elections and call for nominations also had an impact. It is important to have an effective national campaign that highlights *all* local authorities and DHB's are going through elections. While there is relatively intensive media focus on the elections, this seems to be largely centred on the larger cities and areas with notable personalities standing for election. Further to this a lot of focus was placed on the 'Auckland Super-city' elections which overshadowed other authorities' elections.

It is also worth noting the Rangitikei District Council advised all nominees of the elections2010 portal. While many of our nominees took advantage of the tool, it was not well publicised and relied too heavily on councils putting in the time, and resource to promote it. Also, candidate

information such as profile statements, submitted during the nomination process, was not able to be automatically transferred onto the elections2010 website which was a cause of confusion and frustration.

### **Extra week to get voter packs ready**

Rangitikei District Council agrees with SOLGM and LGNZ's position regarding the need for an extra week in between nominations closing and the start of voting. It is a very tight timeframe to get all the information checked and signed off. Currently there is too much room for error.

### **Internet voting**

Rangitikei District Council agrees that use of technology such as the internet should be permitted to enable more people to vote. It provides another opportunity for rural communities and a wider audience to participate in local government elections.

### **Documentation**

It would be preferable if candidates supplied their photo and candidate profile statement at the same time they lodge their nomination documentation. Currently the process is very messy and leaves too much room for error, or for candidate information to get mixed up, or missed.

Local government elections are an important process and provide the best opportunity for the public to have a say in how they would like their local communities to work for them.

Naku noa na

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chalky Leary', written in black ink on a light background.

Chalky Leary  
Mayor  
Rangitikei District