



**METHODIST  
ALLIANCE**  
NGĀ PURAPURA WETERIANA

# **Submission to the Committee on the Electoral Amendment Bill September 2025**

**This submission is from:**

The Methodist Alliance  
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## **Ko wai tātou | Who we are**

The Methodist Alliance is a formal alliance of Methodist Missions, parishes and community based social services and trusts, including cooperating ventures. This grouping constitutes a major provider of a range of services for tamariki/children, rangatahi/young people, and their families/whānau.

The Methodist Alliance brings together a number of large and medium social service providers such as Lifewise in Auckland, Hamilton Methodist Social Services, Palmerston North Methodist Social Services, Wesley Community Action in Wellington, Christchurch Methodist Mission, Methodist Mission Southern in Dunedin, as well as local community services provided by individual parishes. It includes new social service organisations, such as Siaola Vahefonua Tongan Methodist Mission; Puna’Oa - the Samoan Methodist Mission that operates within the Samoan Synod of the Methodist Church; and Te Taha Māori.

Ka whakahōnore mātou i tō mātou whakahoatanga Tiriti – we honour our Tiriti partnership. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the covenant establishing our nation on the basis of a power-sharing relationship. It is the foundation for social, economic and political equality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Methodist Alliance is grounded in our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the bi-cultural journey of the Methodist Church of New Zealand - Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, where Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi work in partnership. We claim the right bestowed by Article Four of Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

“E mea ana te Kawana ko ngā whakapono katoa o Ingarangi, o ngā Weteriana, o Roma, me te ritenga Māori hoki e tiakina ngatahitia e ia.”

“The Governor says the several faiths of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome, and also the Māori custom shall alike be protected by him.”

The Methodist Alliance and our member organisations work collaboratively to achieve our vision of a just and inclusive society in which all people flourish, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

## Tirohanga Whānau | Overview

The Methodist Alliance opposes this Bill, as it will not have the desired outcome and will breach the fundamental rights of thousands of people.

Good legislation seeks to solve a problem and does so in the most efficient and least disruptive way possible – especially in situations where people’s democratic rights will be impacted. This bill would fail on all fronts, worsening Aotearoa’s democracy through refusing people’s legitimate right to vote while not producing the outcomes it’s aiming for.

## Main Points

- 1. The bill seeks to solve a non-existent problem.**
- 2. The bill breaches the Bill of Rights and reduces the number of people who can vote.**
- 3. All citizens and permanent residents have the right to vote.**
- 4. The bill risks jeopardising the Crown’s te Tiriti obligations.**

## Taunakitanga | Recommendations

**Point 1:** The bill seeks to solve a non-existent problem.

If this bill is passed, voters will need to be enrolled 13 days prior to the election date to be eligible to vote, with the intention being to reduce the time needed post-election to count and verify these votes. This will not solve the issue due to several reasons:

- Most special votes do not come from those using same-day enrolment.
- In some cases, a special vote will still be cast, it will just be processed and rejected through the counting/verification process. This will take the same amount of time and resource as counting it<sup>1</sup>.
- It will remove the vote from those who either move addresses during the 13-day period or become eligible to vote in this period (either through turning

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<sup>1</sup> Geddis. (2025). *Changes to electoral law will disenfranchise thousands – and may not save any time*. The Spinoff. Available at: [https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/25-07-2025/changes-to-electoral-law-will-disenfranchise-thousands-and-may-not-save-any-time?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/25-07-2025/changes-to-electoral-law-will-disenfranchise-thousands-and-may-not-save-any-time?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

18 or becoming permanent residents). This means that young people, especially renters who move regularly will be more likely to become ineligible under this legislation.

A simpler solution to the increase in special votes is to have more people and resources available to count and verify them. Higher investment in the Electoral Commission and the hiring of more kaimahi to count and verify votes will have a more effective and efficient impact on the time taken to reach a final count.

**Recommendation:** That this legislation not progress further, and that more investment be made into counting and verifying special votes.

**Point 2:** The bill breaches the Bill of Rights and reduces the number of people who can vote.

The Attorney General and several qualified commentators have identified multiple areas in which this bill breaches the Bill of Rights, including that it removes the ability of some 18-year olds to vote<sup>2</sup>.

The bill will also reduce the number of people able to vote overall, as anyone who would previously have been able to enrol and vote in the 13 days prior to election day will not be able to. In the last election, this is estimated to have been over 200,000 people<sup>3</sup> – over 5% of the voters who participated<sup>4</sup>.

This will not be an equitable reduction in voter eligibility, in fact, through demographic data we know that this change will directly impact the voting power of Māori, young people and renters.

As mentioned, those who turn 18 in the 13-day exclusion period will be unable to vote, renters who move in this period will be unable to update their details and will either be ineligible or only able to place a party vote.

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<sup>2</sup> Collins, J. (2025). *Report of the ATTORNEY-GENERAL under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 on the Electoral Matters Legislation Amendment Bill*. New Zealand Government. Available at: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/constitutional-issues-and-human-rights/the-bill-of-rights-act/compliance-reports/section-7-reports/>

<sup>3</sup> Wade Brown, C. (2025). Quoted in: *Voting reforms, prisoner bans and enrolment changes - What you need to know about the Electoral Amendment Bill*. Radio New Zealand. Available at: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/568340/voting-reforms-prisoner-bans-and-enrolment-changes-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-electoral-amendment-bill>

<sup>4</sup> Electoral Commission. (2023). *2023 General Election Voter Turnout Statistics*. New Zealand Government. Available at: <https://elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/historical-events/2023-general-election/voter-turnout-statistics/>

**Recommendation:** That this legislation not progress further, and that representation be kept front of mind when proposing changes to voter eligibility.

**Point 3:** All citizens and permanent residents have the right to vote.

A fundamental principle of democracy is that of universal suffrage. This is something which Aotearoa prides itself on, being the first country in the world to allow women to vote. Our Bill of Rights, states that every New Zealand Citizen over the age of 18 has the right to vote in our elections<sup>5</sup>. The Attorney General has made note of this, saying that the removal of the right to vote from prisoners is inconsistent with the Bill of Rights<sup>6</sup>.

Aside from the legality of removing this right from a significant number of people, we also see potential negative outcomes for both prisoners and society if this bill were to continue. Voting is a valuable way for people to feel part of society and removing this may have a detrimental effect on the rehabilitation of some people.

People who are incarcerated in Aotearoa experience isolation from the society which has handed them their sentence. They are expected to reintegrate into this society upon gaining their independence, but sadly often this does not occur, and a cycle of ongoing imprisonment occurs.

Further isolating prisoners from the outside world will actively discourage them from integrating into society upon release, reinforcing a sense of alienation and “otherness” which may lead to higher rates of recidivism.

**Recommendation:**

That this bill not progress further, and that the right to vote is entrenched for all citizens and permanent residents.

**Point 4:** The bill is likely to breach the Crown’s obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The Crown is obligated by te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure tino rangatiratanga for Māori and the same rights and protections as Pākehā. At its most basic level, this means that Māori must be given the ability and opportunity to vote for their choice of representatives in Parliament.

The evidence referenced earlier in this submission clearly shows that Māori are more likely than Pākehā to vote in the period directly before and on election day. In passing

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<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. Available at:  
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1990/0109/latest/DLM225511.html>

<sup>6</sup> Collins, J. (2025). *Report of the ATTORNEY-GENERAL under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 on the Electoral Matters Legislation Amendment Bill*. New Zealand Government. Available at:  
<https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/constitutional-issues-and-human-rights/the-bill-of-rights-act/compliance-reports/section-7-reports/>

this legislation, the government would be taking an action which would reduce the Māori voice in New Zealand's democracy, whether it is the intention of the bill or not. To continue with this process in full knowledge of this would be to fail at the most basic step of the government's Treaty obligations.

The Independent Electoral Review Panel described in detail the importance of removing barriers to Māori participation in democracy, and in fact made a case for removing restrictions on enrolment<sup>7</sup> – the opposite of what this bill proposes.

For further information or questions regarding this submission, please contact:

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<sup>7</sup> Independent Electoral Review Board. (2023). Final Report: Our recommendations for a fairer, clearer, and more accessible electoral system. Ministry of Justice. Available at: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/regulatory-stewardship/regulatory-systems/constitutional/democratic-structures-and-processes/>