



BRIEFING TO THE INCOMING MINISTER

December 2023

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Introduction

The Electoral Commission, Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri, is responsible for administering New Zealand's electoral system. We are proud of our contribution to democracy and the work we do to ensure New Zealanders understand, trust and can fully participate in our electoral processes.

The Commission can provide you with robust, informed and evidence-based advice on all aspects of the electoral system to support you in your role as Minister of Justice, responsible for the Electoral Act 1993, and as the responsible Minister for the Commission under the Crown Entities Act 2004.

This briefing describes the objectives and functions of the Commission and sets out the strategic context for our work. It identifies several upcoming issues that we will be seeking your support for or would like to discuss with you.

We would welcome an early opportunity to discuss the immediate and long-term opportunities and challenges for the electoral system and the Commission.

Part One: About the Commission

The Electoral Commission is a Crown entity established by section 4B of the Electoral Act 1993.

The statutory objective of the Commission is to administer the electoral system impartially, efficiently, effectively, and in a way that:

- facilitates participation in parliamentary democracy
- promotes understanding of the electoral system, and
- maintains confidence in the administration of the electoral system.

Our long standing te reo Māori name, Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri, means ‘the guardian of the choice’ and reflects our responsibility as kaitiaki (guardian) of New Zealand’s electoral system. We deliver New Zealand general elections, by-elections and referendums and we provide the rolls that enable local body elections. We also provide electoral advice and support democracy in the broader Pacific region.

Widespread trust in the electoral system — the accuracy of the electoral rolls, the integrity of the election process, and confidence in election results — is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. A high level of participation in the electoral process is an important aspect of this trust. The more people take part, the more the result can be regarded as a legitimate reflection of the will of the people.

Public trust in the electoral system is also maintained by ensuring the Commission operates independently. The Electoral Act 1993 requires that the Commission acts independently in performing its statutory duties and functions. Furthermore, the Crown Entities Act 2004 categorises the Commission as an Independent Crown Entity (ICE). Nonetheless, the Commission remains accountable for its performance to you and is monitored on your behalf by the Ministry of Justice. Our performance framework is included in Appendix Six.

A general election is New Zealand’s largest public event; it is a large and complex logistical exercise with high stakes. The Commission must plan and prepare over several years to deliver a successfully run election, and work continues into the following year to review and report on the delivery of the General Election and recommend improvements.

The Commission is a relatively small organisation, with baseline funding of \$229 million for the three-year 2023 General Election cycle. This excludes by-elections — \$4.1 million was allocated for the Tauranga, Hamilton West, and Port Waikato by-elections in the 2023 General Election cycle. It also excludes other required work such as support to the Representation Commission’s electorate boundary review that follows every Census. The Commission has a core workforce of around 150 people (see Appendix One for an organisation chart) but grows considerably for elections; more than 22,000 temporary roles were required to deliver the 2023 General Election.

The 2023 General Election Key Facts
(see Appendix Two for a more detailed overview)

Number of voters



2,884,111 votes cast
602,488 special votes

Turnout



78.2% turnout of enrolled electors
(82.2% in 2020, 79.8% in 2017)

Logistics



22,000 temporary staff
Over 800 advance voting places
Over 2,300 election day voting places
15 Kaupapa Māori voting places

Enrolment



94.7% of estimated eligible voters enrolled to vote
Approximately 110,000 people enrolled or updated details on election day

Advance voting



61% of votes issued in advance

Overseas



77,295 votes cast from overseas

Part Two: Upcoming Matters for Consideration

There are several short to medium-term matters that the Commission will be seeking to discuss with you. We will provide more detail in further briefings, and we can provide information on other matters at your request.

1. Annual Report

The Commission's 2022/23 Annual Report was provided to the office of the Minister of Justice on 14 November 2023, which was within 15 working days of signing as required by the Crown Entities Act 2004. The Act requires you as the responsible Minister to present the document to the House as soon as possible once the House sits again. The Bills Office has copies and will coordinate with your office on the tabling process. The report was published online on our website on 28 November 2023, in accordance with the deadline within the Act.

2. Report on the 2023 General Election

The Commission is required under s8(1) of the Electoral Act 1993 to provide a report on the 2023 General Election to Parliament within six months of the return of the Writ. The report is provided to you, as responsible Minister, for tabling in Parliament within five working days. The report is also provided to the Justice Committee which, as a matter of convention, conducts an inquiry into the General Election. We will provide you with a final draft of the Commission's Report on the 2023 General Election for your consideration, prior to providing the final report to you in May 2024. The Commission will look into a range of matters relating to the election, and you as Minister can also request that we look into any matters. We would welcome the opportunity to meet you to discuss this.

3. Review of Election Access Fund

The Election Access Fund was established by the Election Access Fund Act 2020 to remove or reduce barriers for people with disabilities to standing as a candidate in a general election or by-election. The fund covers disability-related costs such as sign language interpreters, accessible transport, special equipment, and assistants. Under the Act, the Commission is required to report on the funding as part of its reporting on the 2023 General Election and, as responsible Minister, you are required to review the fund within the following six months and assess whether any amendments to the Act are necessary or desirable. The Ministry of Justice will provide you with advice on this.

4. Support for funding for the Representation Commission 2025

We will be seeking your support for funding from Budget 2024 to establish and operate the independent Representation Commission 2025. Under the Electoral Act, a Representation Commission is a legislative requirement that must be established to review and adjust electorate boundaries to ensure fair representation of New Zealanders in Parliament, when the results of the most recent five-yearly population census are known. The next Representation Commission must review the boundaries in 2025 in time for a 2026 General Election.

The Commission supports the administration of the Representation Commission along with Statistics New Zealand and Land Information New Zealand. The Representation Commission comprises the Chief Executives of these three agencies in addition to the Chief Executives of the Department of Internal Affairs as per their responsibilities for local government portfolios and Te Puni Kōkiri who are responsible for Māori electorates, plus representatives of the Government and the Opposition and

an independent Chairperson appointed by the Governor-General and the Chief Executives of the Representation Commission. Because of its infrequency and its nature as an entity that is separate from the supporting agencies, funding for administering the Representation Commission is not included in the Commission's baseline funding and is funded through a budget bid every five years. The funding would cover the expenses of the Representation Commission and the administrative and technical support provided by the Electoral Commission, Land Information New Zealand, and Statistics New Zealand.

Withheld under s.9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act

5. Agreement to a multi-year appropriation for the 2026 electoral cycle

A multi-year appropriation (MYA) has been in place for the 2023 electoral cycle; however, this has now come to an end. MYAs are used where expenditure falls across two or more financial years with uncertain timing between the years. This provides the Commission with the flexibility to address a range of uncertainties during each election cycle, including unexpected cost pressures, not knowing when the date of the general election will be until year three of the Commission's planning cycle, and not knowing the nature and timing of any policy changes.

The Commission and the Ministry of Justice will be seeking your agreement in early 2024 to create an MYA to enable it to rephase its available funding across the three years within the 2026 electoral cycle, to better reflect the required spend for the next general election. An MYA for the Commission requires joint sign-off between the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance.

Withheld under s.9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act

Part Three: Opportunities and Challenges for the Electoral System

Introduction

The Commission has been delivering well-regarded and efficient elections over the last three decades. Our electoral system has been refined and amended over this time to make voting easier and to support the integrity of electoral processes.

While historically New Zealanders have had strong rates of trust and confidence in the electoral process, we are operating in an increasingly complex environment with changing voter expectations, misinformation, greater risk of disruption and differing participation rates within our diverse society. We need to respond and adapt so we can continue to maintain trust and confidence in our electoral system and sustain high levels of participation.

Successful elections are a balance of accessibility, integrity, and timeliness. The Commission is continually working to manage the balance of these with voter expectations. Our operations are increasingly confronted by changing expectations of society around the use of technology and convenience of services, reliability, and the rapid delivery of information. In meeting these changing expectations, there are also opportunities to simplify our operations and make them more resilient.

1. Voters' needs are changing, and we need to adapt

The electoral system is highly prescribed, with long-standing checks and balances. The Electoral Act 1993 provides detailed rules and processes for the Commission to follow, and elections are carried out with a high degree of scrutiny, security, and transparency. This enables high levels of integrity that supports trust and confidence in the electoral system, but in some cases, this constrains our ability to adapt and innovate.

There is growing interest in enrolling and voting online, but this is not universal. However, voters increasingly expect services to be accessible and flexible and are taking up different ways of voting. This includes an increase in advance voting and special votes since 2011 and enrolment on election day since it was introduced in 2020. While special votes, enrolment on election day and advance voting all support higher enrolment and turnout levels, they are more complex and resource intensive to administer, and they put additional pressure on the existing voting system.

Although there are no immediate plans by Parliament to change our secure paper-based voting system, we need to be prepared, especially with the decline in postal services, to use digital technology to improve and streamline other aspects of voter experience. We have been expanding our digital services including the option to enrol and update enrolment details online but are looking into further options.

Withheld under s.9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act



[Our legislation is outdated and constrains our ability to innovate and change](#)

The Electoral Act was enacted in 1993 and although changes were made for the shift to MMP (Mixed Member Proportional), many parts of the Act were rolled over from the Electoral Act 1956. There are parts of the statutory framework that are outdated and no longer fit for purpose, and some constrain our ability to innovate and change. We will make recommendations about specific legislative changes in our report on the 2023 General Election.

2. Elections have become more complex and expensive to deliver, and we need to grow capabilities to address that change

We face several challenges that threaten to undermine public trust and confidence in electoral processes. Successive elections have required us to increase our efforts to reduce risks from misinformation, deliberate disruption, and extreme weather.

[Misinformation](#)

The Commission must be prepared for the electoral process to be the subject of incorrect information, either through deliberate campaigns aimed at undermining trust in the process, or the sharing of misleading information when people have just got things wrong.

Throughout the 2023 General Election cycle, we worked with online social media platforms to establish escalation mechanisms to report breaches of the election advertising rules we administer and to report mis- or dis-information specifically about the election process. For the 2023 General Election we had escalation mechanisms in place with Meta, Twitter, WeChat, Google, TikTok, Snap, and Microsoft.

[Election interference](#)

Globally, there is an increased risk of foreign interference in electoral processes by state or criminal actors. Cyber-attacks have disrupted electoral systems in the United Kingdom and other countries. Domestically, there has been a heightened awareness of threats to public safety during public activities since the Christchurch Mosque attacks.

We work closely with security agencies to identify and prepare for critical risks, and we have enhanced our systems, capabilities, and processes for identifying and addressing threats.

[The need to accommodate climate related disruptions](#)

We had to change our planned approach to our campaign to inform Māori about changes to the Māori Electoral Option process in areas affected by severe weather events in January and February 2023.

Adverse weather in the South Island on Election Day 2023 resulted in us closing three voting places, and a further 13 later in the day because of related power outages, with preliminary counts moved to other voting places. Weather disruptions related to climate change are increasingly common, and the Commission has needed to put in place additional measures to ensure all parts of New Zealand are able to continue to vote in the event of severe weather disruption.

3. Issues that arose in the 2023 General Election

Globally our electoral processes have been well regarded and rank highly. However, there were delivery issues that occurred in the 2023 General Election that could threaten this reputation, particularly around errors in the final results. The Board has approached the Auditor General who has agreed to review the Commission's quality assurance processes and controls for the counting of votes. The terms of reference for this engagement are currently being finalised.

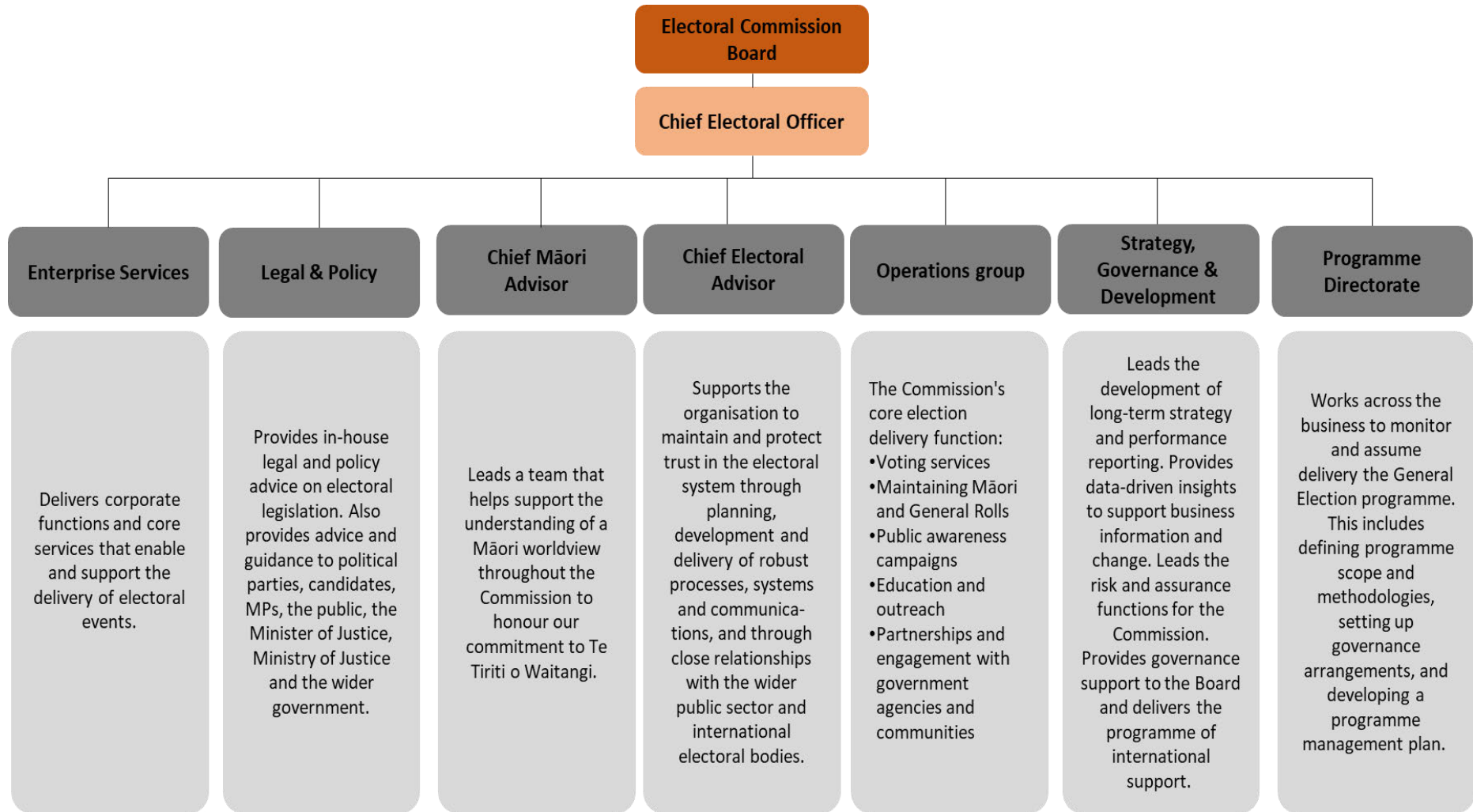
Commentary was also received on EasyVote pack delivery timeframes, the allocation of rural voting places, services for Māori and the time taken to complete the official count. The report into the 2023 General Election will report on these matters in more depth. The Justice Committee holds an inquiry after each General Election, which will provide an opportunity for scrutiny of 2023 performance.

4. Certainty of funding will help us to achieve our desired outcomes

A barrier to the Commission's ability to plan for coming elections and invest in modernisation is the lack of certainty of funding. Sustaining high enrolment and voter turnout requires ongoing effort and investment to improve the enrolment and voting experience and ensure the resilience and integrity of conducting elections. We need to modernise and update elements of our electoral system to ensure we can deliver successful elections that are timely, while also meeting expectations of voters. At the same time, we need to maintain the integrity of the system, and trust and confidence of participants.

The costs of modernisation are also challenged by the increasing costs of election delivery. We have recently faced higher than expected inflationary pressures due to rapidly rising costs of personnel, the leasing and operation of voting places, and the costs of paper, printing, and postage. The short-term nature and specificity of our requirements limit our ability to negotiate in the market. We will be providing you with further advice on the implications of cost pressures on the delivery and integrity of the electoral process within current funding levels. While an MYA has been helpful, it is likely not enough for a long-term solution.

Appendix One — Electoral Commission Organisation Structure



Appendix Two — Overview of the 2023 General Election

In this appendix we describe the key features of elections and provide a brief overview of the 2023 General Election.

Key features of elections in New Zealand

The New Zealand electoral system is designed to encourage voting, while maintaining fairness, secrecy of an individual's ballot, equity, and transparency. To enable participation, and to protect the integrity of the system, New Zealand's elections have the following features:

- election day is always on a Saturday
- advance voting and overseas voting are available before election day
- voters can vote at any voting place in New Zealand
- people can enrol right up to and including election day
- all voting places issue votes for General and Māori electorates
- Justices of the Peace provide independent judicial oversight of the post-election process
- preliminary counts of advance votes and votes cast on election day provide early results on election night
- special votes are counted later as they can come in up to 10 days after election day
- official results are declared 20 days after election day to allow time to process, check and count the special votes; scrutinise the electoral role to identify, for example, voters who may have voted more than once, and to recheck and recount every voting paper counted on election day
- parties and candidates can scrutinise the process
- detailed, reusable data is released in multiple formats following the official count.

The 2023 General Election

The Commission's report to Parliament will provide a comprehensive account of the General Election 2023 and recommendations for the future. Our report will include investigation of issues that arose during the voting period including data errors in the final count, EasyVote pack timeframes, the allocation of rural voting places, services for Māori, and the time taken to complete the official count.

Approach

Our approach to the 2023 General Election was informed by our strategic priorities and by what we learnt from our review of the 2020 General Election. We also assessed how well prepared we were to run a general election in an increasingly complex environment while maintaining public safety and the integrity of the system. In response to this, we:

- carried out earlier and more comprehensive planning and preparation, to build in the resilience and flexibility to respond to any changes in requirements or disruptions
- established regional security and resilience advisors to provide local expertise in election security matters throughout the country and help electorate managers respond to any emerging security concerns
- tested election disruption scenarios as part of our contingency planning for major electoral events
- improved inter-agency coordination to manage risks and support election delivery.

Easy and accessible voting

We continued to make voting easier and more accessible for people from all parts of the community by providing voting places in and around familiar locations that voters might regularly visit such as shopping malls, transport hubs, churches, mosques, universities, schools, and community halls. We partnered with businesses to provide 63 voting places at retail areas including The Warehouse, Pak'nSave and New World supermarkets.

We provided over 800 advance voting places and more than 2,300 voting places on election day – fewer than were provided for the 2020 General Election, when numbers of voting places were increased to enable physical distancing and ‘vote local’ safety messaging during COVID-19 restrictions, but more advance places than were provided in 2017.

Past election reviews have highlighted the importance of providing voting places and services that support Māori voters – for example providing more voting places on marae, and more voting places where services are provided in both te reo Māori and English. Building on our partnering with local Māori and community groups, we expanded our Kaupapa Māori voting places initiative from one pilot in 2020 to 15 sites where our services could be conducted in te reo Māori or English and where our staff reflected the communities they served and spoke a range of languages. These voting sites were open to all voters. There were also 37 voting places at marae across the country.

We also focussed on improving enrolment and voting experiences for people with disabilities. We increased our engagement with groups who advocate for or represent disabled people and worked with Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People to generate ideas for improving services. We worked with the Ministry of Social Development’s disability experts and with providers of disability services to design and develop information resources about enrolling and voting in a range of alternative formats, including audio, large print, Easy Read, New Zealand Sign Language and Braille. All our video content and television advertisements had closed captions.

We provided New Zealand Sign Language interpreters in three voting places in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and used the New Zealand Relay app service, which assists deaf, heard of hearing, speech impaired and deafblind people to communicate over the phone.

Continued trends of high turnout and enrolment rates

Turnout was high, at 78.2%, but slightly down on turnout in the last two elections, which was 82.2% in 2020 and 79.8% in 2017. Turnout in Māori electorates was 68%, slightly lower than 69.1% in 2020 and but up on 66.7% in 2017. The total number of votes cast was 2,884,111. As in 2020, more people voted in advance than on the day, with 61% of votes cast in advance. The final enrolment rate was 94.7%, up from 94.1% in 2020, and 92.4% in 2017. Enrolment rates for 18- to 29-year-olds increased, with 82.9% enrolled (an increase from 80.7% in 2020 and 75.6% in 2017). 567,000 Māori were enrolled on either the Māori or general roll – an increase of more than 31,500 on 2020.

Special votes and enrolment on the day

There were 602,488 special votes cast, which is 20.9% of total votes and an increase of nearly 100,000 from the 2020 General Election. On election day, problems with our e-roll app, which is used for checking the electoral roll, caused delays for some voters while paper rolls were used instead to direct people to issuing desks.

Special votes require additional processing which adds to the time required for the official count.

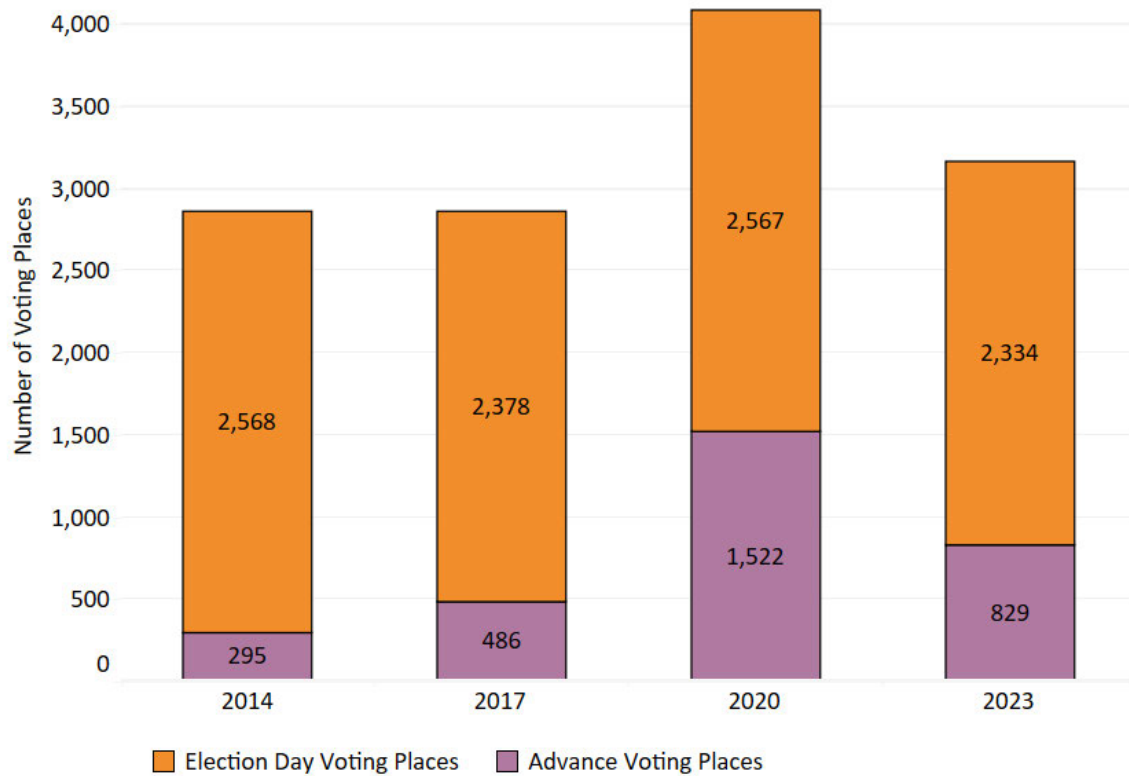
Around 110,000 voters enrolled or updated their enrolment details on Election Day, an increase of over 37% on the 2020 General Election, when the ability to enrol on Election Day was introduced. While this contributed to high enrolment and turnout levels, it resulted in some operational challenges, in particular, increased waiting times at some voting places, because of the increased processing times involved.

Disruptions on Election Day due to adverse weather

We did not experience any significant security issues during the 2023 General Election. However, there were some disruptions to voting places in the South Island on Election Day: in three cases, voting places were closed due to adverse weather and in a further 13, the preliminary count was moved due to power outages caused by weather conditions.

Appendix Three — Graphs Demonstrating Voter Turnouts and Behaviours

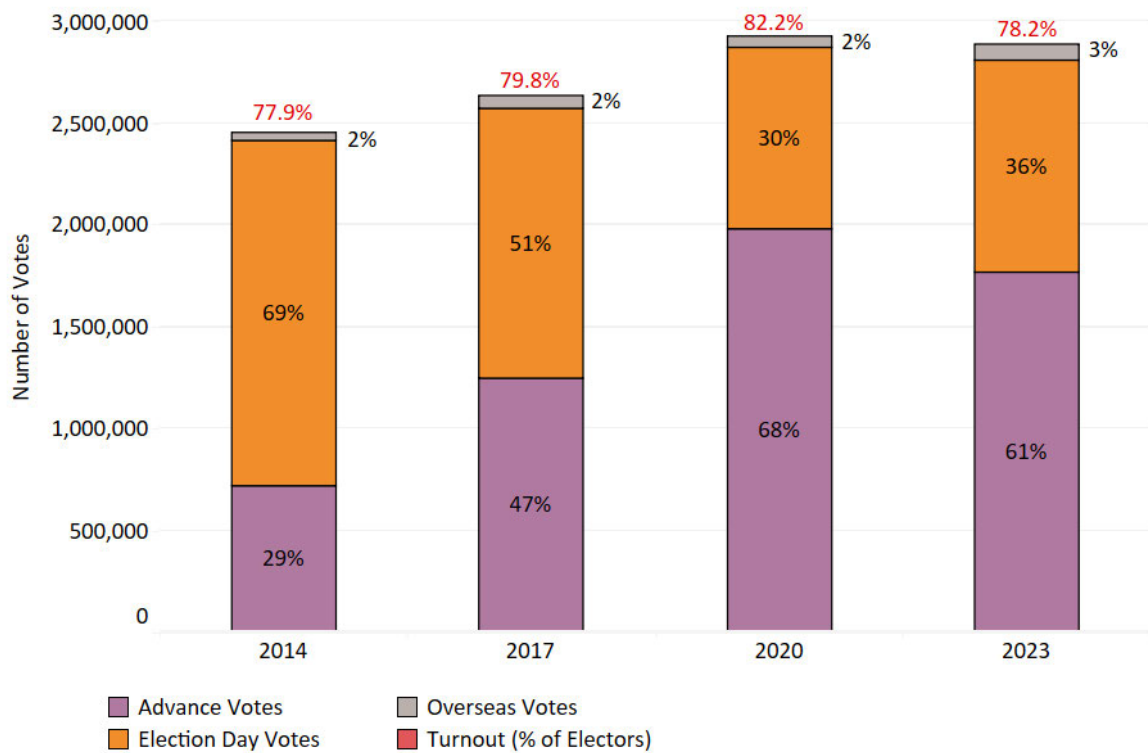
Number of Voting Places and Total Hours of Service in Recent Elections¹



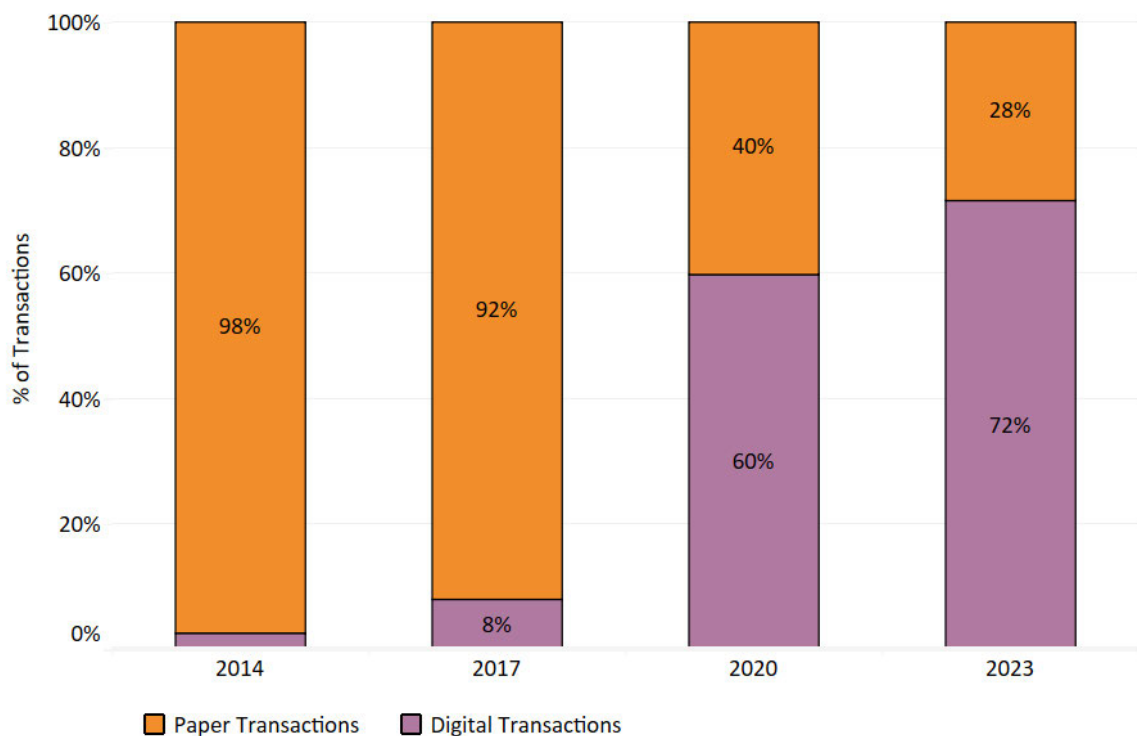
	2014	2017	2020	2023
Total Hours Voting Places Open	46,000	52,000	85,000	75,000

¹ 2020 General Election took place in a Covid 19 pandemic context. As a result, our service levels were different (for example, a longer advance voting period was provided) and voter behaviour was likely impacted as well.

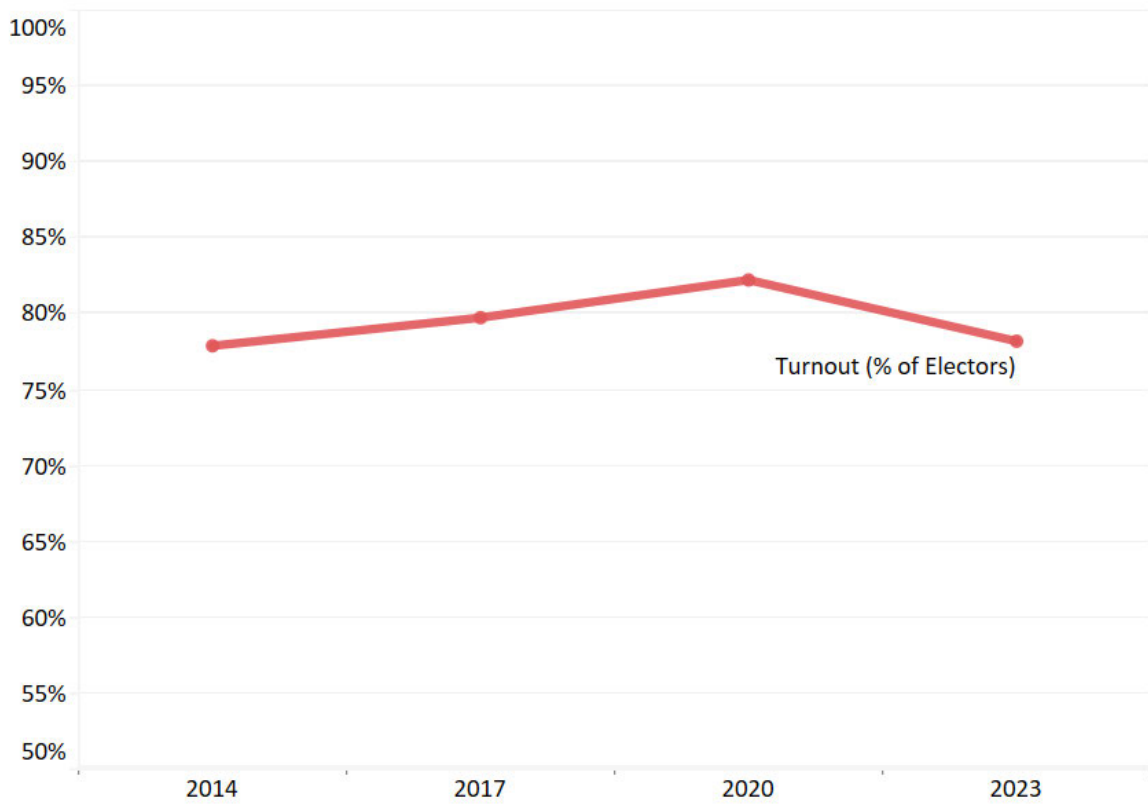
Turnout and Breakdown of Overseas Votes, Election Day Votes and Advance Votes



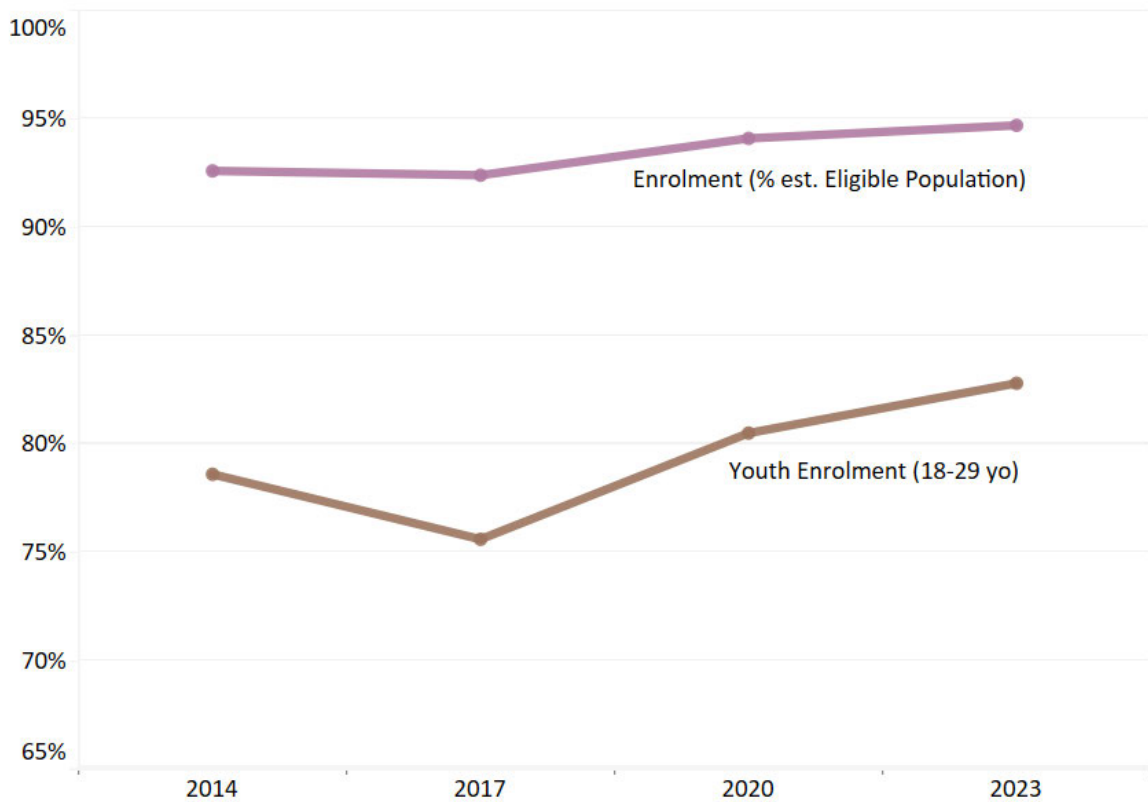
Digital and Paper Enrolment Transactions in 6 Months Prior to Election from 2014



Total Voter Turnout Rates



Total Enrolment Rate vs 18–29-Year-Old Enrolment Rate Only



Appendix Four — Electoral Commission Governance

Electoral Commission Board

The Commission is governed by a Board of three Commissioners: the Chair, Deputy Chair, and the Chief Electoral Officer who is also the Commission's Chief Executive.



*Jane Meares
(Acting Chair)*

*Dame Marie Shroff
DNZM CVO
(Chair — currently on leave
of absence)*

*Karl Le Quesne
(Chief Electoral
Officer)*

The current members of the Board are:

- **Chair: Dame Marie Shroff DNZM CVO (currently on leave of absence)**

Marie's five-year term as Chair of Electoral Commission began in August 2019.

Between 1987 and 2003 Marie was Secretary of the Cabinet and Clerk of the Executive Council, working with four Governors-General, and six Prime Ministers from both major parties. During that time, she co-led a senior officials group which prepared central government for the introduction of the proportional electoral system in New Zealand. Marie also served as Privacy Commissioner from 2003 to 2014. Marie is a member of the Media Council and on the boards of Consumer New Zealand and the Privacy Foundation New Zealand. She was made a Dame Companion in the 2022 New Year's Honours.

- **Acting Chair: Jane Meares**

Jane's five-year term as Deputy Chair of the Electoral Commission began in August 2019.

Jane is a commercial barrister at Clifton Chambers in Wellington. She undertakes public sector and commercial advisory work. She was previously Treasury's chief legal adviser.

Jane is Chair and Chief Commissioner of the Transport Accident Investigation Commission, Chair of Financial Services Complaints Limited, a director of the Electricity Corporation of New Zealand, Chair of the Royal New Zealand Ballet Foundation, member of the Film Commission, and a member of Land Information New Zealand's risk and assurance committee.

- **Chief Electoral Officer: Karl Le Quesne**

Karl Le Quesne (pronounced 'Le Kaine') joined the Commission as Chief Electoral Officer and Chief Executive on 21 April 2022.

He was born in Tokoroa, grew up in Hawke's Bay, and attended university in Wellington before beginning a career in the public service, which so far has spanned 30 years. Most recently he was Deputy Chief Executive of the Organisational Strategy and Performance branch at Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs, which he joined in 2017. Karl has also previously held senior roles at the Departments of Justice and Corrections, and the Ministry of Education.

Appendix Five— Electoral Commission Functions and Strategic Direction

Electoral Commission strategic direction and capability

After the 2020 election, the Commission took the opportunity to look at how we worked, reviewed our capability, and sought to better understand the internal and external pressures on our long-term sustainability and the integrity of the electoral process. In 2022, we secured additional funding to improve capability and support our ability to deliver effective election services in a modern responsive way. We have delivered increased capability in areas such as:

- health, safety, and wellbeing — a high risk area for our election workforce of 22,000 who work long and intensive hours
- our programme planning and management capabilities
- IT improvements to make the voting process run more smoothly and increase our resilience to cyber-attack
- procurement, including improving property procurement for the election.

The Commission is now building capability to look beyond the three-year electoral cycle to manage strategic risks, design future services and develop our long-term strategy.

Electoral Commission functions

The Commission carries out a wide range of functions and activities to meet its statutory objectives — these are set out below.

Conduct general elections, by-elections, and referendums

The Commission is responsible for ensuring all systems and processes are in place for the smooth running of general elections, by-elections and referendums that support the rights of voters to vote freely and in secret.

Its voting services include:

- recruitment and training of returning officers and voting place staff
- logistical planning for the provision and return of voting supplies
- finding voting place locations that meet the needs of different communities
- oversight of voting during the advance voting period and on election day
- conducting the preliminary and official count of votes, and
- the release of the results.

Maintain electoral rolls and enable the Māori Electoral Option

The Commission has nine regional offices staffed by Registrars of Electors and deputies who are responsible for the compilation and maintenance of the General and Māori electoral rolls.

New Zealand has a continuous enrolment system that provides for ongoing daily maintenance of the rolls as people enrol, move, and update their details. The electoral rolls always need to be in a state of readiness for any parliamentary or local electoral event. Enrolment update campaigns are conducted prior to parliamentary and local body elections to give voters the opportunity to enrol or update their details for those elections.

It is compulsory for all qualified people in New Zealand to be on an electoral roll. Qualified means:

- 18 years or older
- New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- lived in New Zealand for one year or more without leaving the country.

Through the Māori Electoral Option, we enable enrolled voters of Māori descent to choose which electoral roll to be on — the General roll or the Māori roll. On 31 March 2023, a law change came into effect which allowed Māori to change between the Māori and general electoral rolls at any time except in the three months before a General Election. Previously, Māori could only change rolls during the Māori Electoral Option period held once every five or six years. We held a public information and education campaign to promote awareness of this change.

Help New Zealanders take part in parliamentary elections

The Commission has a statutory responsibility to administer the parliamentary electoral system in an inclusive way that ensures that all New Zealanders understand and have confidence in the electoral system and can participate in democracy. The Commission's data and research identifies where enrolment and turnout are low, the groups that are less likely to vote, and the reasons why they are not enrolling and voting. We also identify groups that are not accessing mainstream media and advertising about enrolling and voting. This data informs our strategies and our targeted engagement in enrolment, education, and voting services.

The Commission's ongoing community engagement programme plays a key part in reaching less engaged audiences including youth, Māori, Pacific peoples, and new migrants. We also partner with population-focussed government agencies and non-governmental organisations to support our engagement. The communities we work with are increasingly looking for us to create long-term enduring relationships and work in partnership with them throughout the electoral cycle. This approach grows knowledge of how our democracy works, minimises misinformation and builds confidence. We are planning to review our engagement approaches and explore further opportunities with all priority communities.

The Commission continues to strengthen its relationships with Māori communities, to improve our services to Māori through better understanding barriers to enrolment and participation in the electoral system. This is supported by a collaborative process and guided by Nga Maihihioterā, our Māori strategy.

The Commission undertakes extensive public education campaigns to raise awareness of upcoming electoral events and encourage participation, including advertising campaigns.

The Commission has developed curriculum-aligned civics teaching units for use in schools and regularly visits schools to encourage enrolment. In general election years, schools are invited to take part in the Kids Voting Te Pōti a Ngā Tamariki programme and run their own mock elections so students can learn first-hand about New Zealand's electoral system. In 2023, 667 schools and 117,000 students took part in the programme.

Provide guidance for parties and candidates and manage compliance of election participants

The Commission provides advice and guidance to political parties, candidates and third parties during electoral events so that they can comply with their obligations under electoral legislation. This includes advice on election campaigning, expenditure and donations rules, the registration of parties and compliance reporting. The Commission will investigate complaints, including from members of

the public, about potential breaches of the Electoral Act 1993 and refer matters to the police if necessary.

Parties have ongoing compliance obligations throughout the parliamentary term, to report donations and continue to satisfy the statutory requirements to be registered. Annual returns are received from party secretaries and published on the www.elections.nz website. Party secretaries must also complete an annual statutory declaration relating to the number of members of the party.

In election year we also provide a range of briefings for party secretaries, third parties, media, Members of Parliament, and candidates.

The Commission is responsible for the registration of political parties and their logos in accordance with the requirements of Part 4 of the Electoral Act 1993.

The Commission administers allocation of a broadcasting fund. The amount available is determined by Parliament. Prior to each general election, registered parties or parties that intend to register before the election can apply for funding.

Administer the Election Access Fund

The Electoral Commission administers a fund to support people with disabilities to stand as candidates in elections. The fund was set up under the Election Access Fund Act 2020.

Four candidates were supported to stand in the 2023 General Election, with a total of around \$45,000 allocated for support assistants, travel, and equipment.

Carry out post-election review and reporting

Immediately after the delivery of a general election, we complete extensive post-election reviews and reporting including a financial performance review, a survey of voters and non-voters and performance measurement reviews.

Support local elections

While local body elections are conducted by territorial authorities under the provisions of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Local Electoral Regulations 2001 and the Local Government Act 2002, the Commission provides some support to local body elections through:

- providing electoral roll data to all local councils for the elections
- conducting an enrolment update campaign prior to the local body election period to ensure the rolls are up to date, and
- producing a public information and education strategy to support this campaign and local bodies.

Local body elections are held on the second Saturday in October every three years. The next local body elections will be held in 2025.

Support electoral policy development

We use our knowledge and expertise to provide advice on electoral policy development and legislative reviews.

Support the Representation Commission

Under the Electoral Act, a Representation Commission is a legislative requirement and must be established to review and adjust electorate boundaries to ensure fair representation of New Zealanders in Parliament, when the results of the most recent five-yearly population census are

known. The next Representation Commission must review the boundaries in 2025 in time for a 2026 General Election.

The Commission supports the administration of the Representation Commission along with Statistics New Zealand and Land Information New Zealand. The Representation Commission comprises the Chief Executives of these three agencies in addition to the Chief Executives of the Department of Internal Affairs as per their responsibilities for local government portfolios and Te Puni Kōkiri who are responsible for Māori electorates, plus representatives of the Government and the Opposition and an independent Chairperson appointed by the Governor-General and the Chief Executives of the Representation Commission.

The next Representation Commission will be established during 2024 with public consultation on the proposed revised boundaries scheduled to occur in 2025.

Provide support to other countries

The Commission participates in networks with electoral management bodies from other democracies with similar electoral systems, leveraging opportunities for sharing electoral expertise and investigating enhanced techniques for conducting electoral events. These include an exclusive network with Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Four Countries), and another between the federal and state electoral commissions of Australia and New Zealand (ECANZ). The Commission is also a member of a regional network of Pacific Island and Australian electoral administrators (PIANZEA).

The Commission hosts a range of visiting delegations and study tours, in association with MFAT and/or Parliamentary Services, and provides election-related briefings for the Diplomatic Corps based in New Zealand and pre-departure briefings for New Zealand diplomats posted overseas.

The Commission provides electoral assistance programmes to Pacific electoral management bodies. Current bilateral programmes are in Papua New Guinea, the autonomous region of Bougainville, Fiji, and Tonga, with another seven Pacific country electoral management bodies under the Pacific Electoral Assistance Programme: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, and Tuvalu. The electoral assistance programmes are funded under the New Zealand Aid Programme. Additionally, on request and with MFAT approval and funding, the Commission provides ad hoc support for other Pacific elections — for example, the provision of essential election supplies.

Performance framework

A healthy democracy, trust and confidence in the electoral system, and high voter participation are central to the Commission's performance framework shown below. This framework guides our service performance measures and our reporting to you. The Commission will review the framework as it reflects on lessons learned from the 2023 General Election and will consult with you on any proposed changes.

Appendix Six— Performance Framework

