

Statement of Intent Tauākī Takune

2025/26 – 2028/29



**ELECTORAL
COMMISSION**
TE KAITIAKI TAKE KŌWHIRI



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Foreword

Wāhinga kōrero

Ko te putanga mai o tēnei Tauākī Takune he wā hurihuri mō Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri, i a mātau e takatū ana mō ngā huringa mau roa e hiahiatia ana kia mauria ai te tino kounga o te whakatutuki i ngā mahi a te pūnaha pōti me te whakapono o ngā kaipōti o Aotearoa.

E hihiko ana mātau i tā mātau hāpai i te manaporitanga ora. E kite ana hoki i ngā wāhi ka taea tonutia e mātau te whakakaha te whāomo rauemi, ka taea tonutia hoki te whakakaha tā mātau whakaea i ngā hiahia o te marea, tae atu ki te whakahoutanga o ētehi o ngā ratonga pōti. E mōhio ana hoki, he mahi atu nō kei mua i a mātau ki te whakakaha i ā mātau tukanga whakaū kounga, ki te whakatinana hoki i ērā atu tūtohutanga i puta ai i te arotakenga o ngā hapa i ahu mai i te wā o te tatauranga ōkawa o ngā pōti i te Pōtitanga Whānui 2023.

Nā te pikinga taupori, nā ngā huringa o ngā whanonga o te hunga kaipōti, nā ngā uauatanga ā-utu hoki, e piki ana te uaua o te whakaū i te whāomo rauemi i roto i te pūnaha pōti, i tōna tere me tōna tautoko i te mārama pū me te whai wāhitanga mai o ngā kaipōti. He maha ngā painga mō te tōtika o te pōtitanga, nēi whakahaerehia ki te pepa me te mahi ā-ringa. Heoi, ko te tupu haere te tuatinitini me te rahi o ngā tauwhitinga. E herea ana te wā o te tukanga, me te aha, e pēhia ana e tērā tūāhuatanga.

Nā konā hoki e whakatupuria nei te tūponotanga o ngā hapa. He herenga nō tā mātau whakawhirinaki ki te poutāpeta hei ara whakawhiti kōrero ki ngā kaipōti, i te mea e tupu ana te utu, ka mutu, e heke ana te putuputu o ngā ratonga poutāpeta.

He tūtohutanga kei roto i tā mātau pūrongo mō te Pōtitanga ā-Motu 2023. Ko ētehi o ēnei he huringa ture e hīkina ai ngā taumahatanga i te pūnaha, e kaha ake ai hoki te whāomo rauemi. I tā te kāwanatanga mahere pūtea o 2025, i tukua mai he pūtea tāpiri kia rangahau ai mātau i ngā painga ka hua mai peangē i ngā hangarau pōtitanga. Ahakoa he waiwai, he tōmuri hoki te whakahoutanga, kua ako mātau, nā runga i ngā wheako o ngā umanga whakahaere pōtitanga o tāwāhi, me mātua āta whakamahaere, me mātua āta whakamātautau, ina whakaurua te kātū huringa e hiahiatia ana. Me manawanui hoki tātau, i te mea ka hipa ētehi pōtitanga kia whakatinanahia rā anō ngā painga o ēnei huringa.

Hei tīmatanga mō te ara whakahoutanga, kua tautohu mātau i ētehi whakapainga me ētehi huringa e kaha ake ai te whāomo rauemi, he mea e taea nei e mātau ahakoa kāhore he huringa ture.

He take nō e hāngai ana ki te ao whānui te huhua haere o ngā pārongo mō te manaporitanga me ngā pōtitanga. He nui te wāhi o aua kōrero kāhore kē i te tika. E hono ana ki tērā tūāhuatanga te hekenga ā-ao o te whakapono ki ngā umanga kāwanatanga me ngā manaporitanga. I tēnei horopaki, he mea waiwai te hāpai tonu i te whakapono ki Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri me tā tātau pūnaha pōti, inā hoki e whakaritea ana, e whakatinanahia ana ngā huringa nui, i te mea me mārāma aua huringa ki te hunga tūmatanui, me whakaae hoki e rātau.

E toru ngā whāinga mātāmua ā-rautaki kua whakatauria e mātau kia urupare ai mātau ki ēnei uauatanga me ēnei ara wātea, kia tuku tonu hoki mātau i ngā hua pai mō ngā tāngata o Aotearoa:

- 1 Te whakakaha i tō mātau tūāpapa
- 2 Te whakahou i ngā ratonga pōti
- 3 Te whakapiki i te mōhio me te whakapono.

E whakaatu ana tēnei tuhinga i aua whāinga mātāmua ā-rautaki me ngā whakatutukitanga e manakotia ana i mua i te paunga o 2028/29. Ki te kore e huri ngā ture, ka huri ētehi tūāhuatanga o tā mātau mahere mahi mō te whā tau e heke mai nei.

Ahakoa e titiro whakamua ana mātau ki ngā hurihuringa, ā, e whakatinana ana i ngā rautaki e hāngai ana ki aua huringa, me mātua maumahara mātau, ko tā mātau kawenga matua he whakahaere i ngā pōtitanga kia tika. I tēnei wā, me noho tā mātau whakahaere i te Pōtitanga ā-Motu 2026 hei aronga matua.

E whakamānawa atu nō ana te Poari o Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri ki ā mātau kaimahi e whakapau kaha nei, e manawanui mai nei ki tēnei umanga me ngā kaipōti o Aotearoa.

This Statement of Intent comes at a time of significant transition for the Electoral Commission, as we prepare for longer-term changes that are necessary to maintain high levels of electoral system performance and the trust and confidence of New Zealand electors.

We are proud of our work supporting a healthy democracy. We also recognise that there are opportunities for greater efficiency and to meet public expectations better, including the modernisation of some electoral services. We are also conscious we have more work to do to improve our quality assurance processes and to implement the other recommendations arising from the reviews into the errors that occurred during the 2023 General Election official vote count period.

Population growth, changing voter behaviour and cost pressures are making it increasingly difficult to ensure the electoral system remains efficient, timely and supports high levels of understanding and participation by electors. While there are many integrity advantages to a highly manual, paper-based election model, the growing complexity and volume of transactions during an election places pressure on a timebound process. It also increases the chance of error.

Our reliance on post to communicate with electors is also a constraint as post is increasingly costly and becoming less efficient as the frequency of postal services declines.

In our report on the 2023 General Election, we made a number of recommendations. These included legislative amendments to reduce pressure on the system and to introduce greater efficiencies. Through Budget 2025 we received additional funding to investigate the potential benefits of election technologies. While modernisation is both essential and overdue, we have learned from the experiences of other international electoral management bodies that changes of the sort required cannot be introduced without careful planning and extensive testing. We must also be patient as it will be several electoral cycles before the tangible benefits of change are realised. As a first step towards modernisation, we have identified improvements and efficiencies which can be implemented without legislative change.

Another issue of global significance is the proliferation of information available about elections and democracy. Much of it inaccurate and misleading. Related is the international trend of declining trust in government institutions and democracies. In this environment, maintaining confidence in the Electoral Commission and our electoral system is crucial, particularly as we prepare for and implement significant changes that the public must understand and accept.

We have set three new strategic priorities to respond to these challenges and opportunities and continue to deliver good outcomes for New Zealanders:

- 1 **Priority 1: Strengthening our foundations**
- 2 **Priority 2: Modernising electoral services**
- 3 **Priority 3: Building knowledge and trust**

These strategic priorities and what we aim to achieve by 2028/29 are set out in this document. Some aspects of our work programme for the next four years will be dependent on whether legislative change occurs.

While we anticipate change, and are implementing strategies to meet it, we must not forget that our core responsibility is to deliver effective elections. At this time our primary focus must be on delivering the 2026 General Election.

The Board of the Electoral Commission takes this opportunity to repeat its gratitude to our staff for their hard work and their commitment to the organisation and to New Zealand electors.



Hon Simon Moore KC
Chair

Pou Kaiāwhā,
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri



Jane Meares
Deputy Chair

Pou Kaiāwhā,
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri



Karl Le Quesne
Chief Electoral Officer

Pou Kaiāwhā,
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

Who we are and what we do

Ko wai mātou me ā mātou mahi

Our purpose

The Electoral Commission, Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri, is an independent Crown entity established by the Electoral Act 1993 (the Act). Our name Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri means ‘the guardian of the choice’ and reflects our responsibility as kaitiaki (guardian) of New Zealand’s electoral system.

Our purpose, as defined in the Act, is to administer New Zealand’s 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 work contributes to a healthy democracy in New Zealand by providing an electoral system people can have trust and confidence in as well as helping people to take part in electoral processes. We also help safeguard democracy in the region by supporting our Pacific neighbours to conduct their elections by offering technical assistance through the New Zealand Aid Programme. Our regular activities are depicted on the following page.

While we are part of the public sector, we work independently from government, staying neutral and upholding electoral law. We are supported by the Ministry of Justice Te Tāhū o te Ture as our monitoring department and funded through the Vote Justice non-departmental output class ‘General Election and Electoral Services’.

Our people

We are a team of 156 permanent staff. Our workforce expands significantly in the lead up to a general election as we recruit staff to fill approximately 24,000 temporary roles.

We are led by a Board of three, the Chair, Deputy Chair and Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer is the Chief Executive of the Commission.

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Our work contributes to a healthy democracy in New Zealand

What we do

Deliver parliamentary elections

We deliver New Zealand's general elections. We conduct parliamentary by-elections and referendums as required.

Post-election review and reporting

After each general election we review the election and provide a comprehensive report on what improvements can be made to election delivery and electoral laws.

Provide information and education

We educate New Zealanders about the electoral system and the part they play by enrolling and voting in parliamentary elections.

Manage compliance of election participants

We provide parties and candidates with information on how to take part and how to meet their statutory obligations. We register and de-register political parties and administer candidate nominations.

Provide support to other countries

We provide technical assistance to neighbouring countries in the Pacific to help them prepare for and conduct their electoral events.

Support electoral policy development

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

Maintain electoral rolls

We register electors and keep the electoral rolls up to date and accurate.

Enable the Māori Electoral Option

We enable eligible voters of Māori descent to choose which electoral roll to be on – the general roll or the Māori roll and provide ongoing information about the choice to Māori electors.

Support enrolment for local elections

We provide Māori Electoral Option information and deliver an enrolment update campaign before local elections and provide enrolment data to support local elections.

Administer the Election Access Fund

We administer and report on the Fund that supports disabled people to seek selection and stand as candidates in general elections and by-elections.

Allocate broadcasting funding

Before each general election we allocate funding for broadcasting and advertising to eligible parties.

Support the Representation Commission

Every five years we support the Representation Commission, an independent body that reviews the boundaries and names of electorates.

Our values

We reference our values as poutokomanawa – the central pole of a wharenui. Like poutokomanawa, our values underpin everything we do.

Uakaha

Ka uakaha, ka hihiri hoki, te mamahi

Being dynamic and energetic in what we do

The eyes of the poutokomanawa symbolise our strength and unwavering energy. This vitality drives us to innovate, breaking down barriers to participation and enhancing enrolment and voting. We embrace change with enthusiasm, uplifting each other and striving for continuous improvement to deliver fair and unbiased elections.

Tūhonohono

Ka taura heretia ai ngā tūhonohono tāngata e tupu ai te pūnaha manapori

Bringing people together to increase participation in democracy

The poutokomanawa provides a secure foundation and connection to the land, maintaining unique relationships and identities. This connection promotes self-determination requiring inclusive community-led approaches that respect diverse ways of being and decision-making. We empower communities, we foster collective participation, and achieve equitable and improved outcomes.

Arataki

Ka aratakina kia mārama
Guiding towards greater understanding and empowerment

The poutokomanawa connects Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and defines the space between – te ao mārama, a space of enlightenment and clarity. This clarity guides us to protect democracy by acting with tika, transparency, and consistency. Through this commitment, we enable communities to lead and shape democracy, deepening understanding and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement and growth.

Tika

Mahia kia tika, kia titika te mahi

Doing the right things. Doing things right!

The face of this poutokomanawa binds us to our whakapapa, connecting us to the wisdom and responsibilities of our lineage. This connection ensures our actions align with integrity, fairness, and professionalism. We uphold the highest standards, fostering equitable participation and working impartially with accountability and pragmatism – always striving to do what is right.

Manaaki

Ka māhaki ngākau nui ai, ka whakamana

Demonstrating generosity and empowering people

The taratara-a-kai pattern on this waka taonga symbolizes our commitment to manaaki, reflecting our interconnectedness and care. As guardians of democracy, we ensure that diverse perspectives are heard and will influence our service and systems. We cultivate a supportive, respectful environment that values people, empowers communities, and strengthens leadership.



Our strategic performance framework

Our strategic performance framework guides our work and informs the choices we make. It also provides a way of evaluating whether we are making good progress towards our outcomes, delivering our services effectively and managing the organisation well.

Our **outcome** and **impacts** are the results we aim to achieve for New Zealand through our work. Our impacts are aligned to our statutory objectives as set out in the Act.

Through our **activities**, we deliver services and information to New Zealanders and contribute to achieving our outcome and impacts.

Our **enablers** are the resources we need to manage well so we can be effective both now and in the future.

Our **strategic priorities** are where we will direct our focus over the next four or more years to respond to challenges and opportunities in our operating environment and ensure we achieve our outcome and impacts.



Our strategic intentions

Ā mātou takunetanga ā-rautaki

This section explains the challenges and opportunities we are facing and sets out our strategic intentions for 2025–2029, including our strategic priorities and how we will deliver electoral services and improve our capability.

Where we are now

Free and fair elections are a key contributor to a healthy democracy. They enable New Zealanders to exercise their democratic rights to vote and stand for election as a member of parliament. High levels of participation and trust in elections play an important role in public acceptance of governing arrangements and the peaceful transfer of power.

Our electoral system performs to a high standard internationally

New Zealand's electoral system consistently ranks highly in international comparisons of democracies.¹ However, alongside these rankings, there are early indicators of declining performance.

New Zealand has high levels of overall participation, with a 94.7% enrolment rate and 78.2% turnout of registered voters at the 2023 General Election. Similarly, surveyed voters and non-voters consistently report high levels

of understanding of enrolment and voting processes, with at least 90% of respondents indicating good or very good/excellent understanding in successive surveys.²

Voters continue to report high levels of satisfaction with the voting services we provide for general elections. After the 2023 General Election, 93% of surveyed voters rated the voting process 'excellent' or 'very good'. This was despite some challenges during the voting period contributing to longer wait times for some voters.

Overall confidence in the Commission and its staff declined between the 2020 and 2023 general elections, although levels were still high with 74% of surveyed voters and non-voters rating their confidence that the Electoral Commission conducts elections fairly as 4 or 5 out of 5, and 73% rating their confidence that our staff conduct parliamentary elections impartially as 4 or 5 out of 5.

1. The Economist Intelligence Unit *Democracy Index 2024*, February 2025, available at: <https://www.eiu.com/n/global-themes/democracy-index/>

2. 90% of respondents to our 2023 post-election survey of voters and non-voters rated their understanding of both the overall voting processes and enrolment processes as good or very good/excellent. We have conducted two annual surveys since then with results of between 90% and 94% for these questions.

This decline was in line with the experience of other New Zealand public sector organisations³ and appears to reflect a global trend of declining trust in government institutions.⁴

Sustaining confidence and trust in the electoral system is key to ensuring that New Zealand's democracy is healthy and that, if an electoral event is held out of the usual cycle, people are willing and able to participate. Some of that trust is built through knowledge and awareness of the electoral system, some is built through transparency and demonstrated trustworthiness. This includes confidence that the election has high integrity.

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High levels of participation and trust in elections play an important role in public acceptance of governing arrangements and the peaceful transfer of power

We have some work to do to strengthen the integrity of our election processes, systems and controls. Following the release of the 2023 General Election official results, errors were identified that required amendments to the results. Although the errors did not change the overall results, they were concerning. The identification of these errors and subsequent reviews of our quality assurance processes, including a review by the Auditor-General,⁵ revealed that some of our controls were inadequate or not well documented and understood. The Auditor-General's review also highlighted the need to invest in and modernise a number of areas of election management. These improvements are reflected through our priorities in this document.

We need to improve the efficiency of the electoral system

It is increasingly challenging to deliver elections efficiently and to successfully mitigate risks. We need to address these challenges now if we are to maintain the high performance of our electoral system.

3. Verian Public Sector Reputation Index New Zealand 2024, 28 May 2024, available at: <https://veriangroup.com/hubfs/Reputation%20Index%20Reports/NZ/Public-Sector-Reputation-Index-2024-NZ.pdf>
4. OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results, 10 July 2024, available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2024/07/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results_eeb36452.html

Society is changing. New Zealand's population continues to grow, become more diverse and mobile. People access services in different ways than they did when our electoral system was designed. These factors are increasing the volume of complex enrolment and voting transactions. During an election, this places significant pressure on voting places and on the completion of post-election processes within statutory timeframes.

Legislated delivery methods have constrained our ability to adapt our services, particularly our ability to use digital technologies to manage the growing number of complex transactions more efficiently. The current election model is paper based and highly manual, which drives increasing costs, particularly in our core expenditure areas of post, people, printing and property. For instance, between 2020 and 2023, NZ Post increased its postal cost by 64.4% and we are estimating an increase of approximately 28% per year during the current electoral cycle.

There is an opportunity to modernise, build confidence in, and future-proof the electoral system

The current election model will become less effective, increasingly expensive and more prone to error as the population continues to grow, and as people seek greater flexibility and convenience. We have an opportunity to modernise how electoral services are delivered to reflect the way New Zealanders are living and transacting and future-proof the electoral system. This includes using technology to deliver better services, improve accuracy and timeliness and reduce cost. Retaining key parts of the current paper-based system will still be important for participation and confidence and trust.

A strong and sustainable New Zealand electoral system is increasingly important as the context for our democracy continues to change. Our interconnectedness with the world means New Zealanders are continuously consuming information about elections, democracy and government, some of it misleading or inaccurate, and are influenced by global trends

5. The report is available at: <https://oag.parliament.nz/2024/election-2023>

of growing distrust in government institutions and dissatisfaction with democratic systems. We cannot take the strength of our democracy for granted. As we modernise and strengthen the integrity of election systems and processes, we must also ensure New Zealanders understand the importance of an independent democratic election and are confident to participate in it.

Where we want to be

Delivering well-run elections and election results that New Zealanders can trust is critical. As we deliver in the short term, we must also begin to build the future electoral system.

This means taking a long-term view of what New Zealanders need from the system, finding ways to operate more efficiently, adapt to future population growth and changes in society while still maintaining the integrity of the current system and ensuring New Zealanders maintain high levels of confidence in it.




This will require changes to legislation, delivery models, technology and processes to remove complexity, reduce the impact of volume and cost pressures, and respond to public expectations of using technology to access services.

It will also require additional investment over the medium to long term and careful change management to ensure risks are well managed and both the Commission and New Zealand voters can adapt to changes.

Our approach to this is set out in the remainder of this section.

Our strategic priorities

Our **strategic priorities** are where we will direct our focus over the next four or more years to respond to challenges and opportunities in our operating environment and ensure we achieve our outcome and impacts.

-  **Priority 1: Strengthening our foundations**
-  **Priority 2: Modernising electoral services**
-  **Priority 3: Building knowledge and trust**



Priority 1: **Strengthening our foundations**

What we mean

Our foundations are the resources that enable us to run the Commission and administer the electoral system effectively and efficiently. This includes our funding, people, processes and controls, technology systems and other assets. We have been investing in our capability since a review in 2021 identified gaps, and we need to continue that investment, such as in risk and assurance and programme and change management. We can also make better use of data and technology. Reviews of the 2023 General Election highlighted that we also need to improve our processes and controls, how they are documented and to streamline and make our processes and technology systems less complex. We need funding certainty to plan effectively and to invest in longer-term improvements. To meet the challenges facing the electoral system we also require strong governance in a broad range of areas.

Why this is a priority

Delivering an election with high integrity, with a temporary workforce comprising over 24,000 roles requires a strong foundation of governance, processes, technology, training, and risk management.

This priority will help us to manage the impacts of population growth and changing voter behaviour on the electoral system in the short term, while also providing a strong foundation for modernisation. It will provide assurance that we are operating both our organisation and the electoral system efficiently and effectively, and that our systems, processes and controls will protect the integrity of the electoral system.

What success looks like

We will implement a number of improvements before the 2026 General Election. Other changes will need to wait until the following electoral cycle to ensure they can be embedded appropriately. By 2029 we will have:

- ✓ enhanced the recruitment system and workforce strategy to ensure the Commission has the right number of staff with the appropriate skills and experience to effectively deliver electoral events
- ✓ established 'surge capacity' teams for general elections to support areas under pressure
- ✓ simplified and streamlined critical election processes to remove complex steps and reduce the risk of errors
- ✓ reviewed and improved our quality and integrity processes and controls to detect and prevent error including automating checks where possible
- ✓ embedded risk and assurance tools and practices across the Commission
- ✓ expanded the Board's skillset in areas of key importance to the Commission.

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Delivering an election with high integrity, with a temporary workforce comprising over 24,000 roles requires a strong foundation of governance, processes, technology, training, and risk management



Priority 2: **Modernising electoral services**

What we mean

There are opportunities to use technology and change system settings to improve the efficiency, timeliness and integrity of electoral processes. For example, opportunities exist to use data from other agencies to update electors' details when these change and then to gain assurance that those details are correct by contacting electors through a range of channels. This would increase the ongoing accuracy of the electoral rolls and would reduce enrolment activity during the election period, enabling staff to focus on the operation of voting places and the critical official count processes.

There are also technologies that have the potential to bring efficiencies to voting and vote count processes, such as the ability to electronically mark off the electoral rolls and to digitally scan and count votes. There are also opportunities to communicate and deliver enrolment and voting services in ways that better meet electors' expectations, which will support participation.

Why this is a priority

Many of these opportunities require legislative change, investment in improved processes and technology, and carefully phased implementation. The benefits will take several electoral cycles to achieve. This work needs to start now, as without modernisation it will become increasingly challenging and unsustainable to conduct elections and to deliver accurate official results within statutory timeframes.

Growth in the overall voting population and the growing volume and complexity of transactions is putting pressure on a manual, time-bound electoral system. Furthermore, industries that we rely on to deliver elections, such as print and paper are impacted by lengthening supply chains and increasing costs, and post is similarly becoming more expensive and being delivered less frequently. This impacts timeliness and reach.

What success looks like

Our work in this area is dependent on changes to legislation. We made recommendations to enable these changes in our report on the 2023 General Election. If these changes become law, by 2029 we will have:

- ✓ further extended our current data matching arrangements with agencies to allow us to receive digital contact details (email addresses and mobile phone numbers)
- ✓ started using extended data matching to directly update electors' details to lift enrolment rates and roll accuracy
- ✓ started to communicate via digital channels with electors.

Other changes to prepare for the future can be progressed regardless of legislation change. By 2029 we will have:

- ✓ clarified the investment needed, including a business case, for investment in future technologies for communication, automatic enrolment updates and to improve election processes
- ✓ redesigned the approach to enrolment to transition to a continuous function rather than an event or campaign driven function
- ✓ started testing different election technologies, to be more fully implemented across multiple electoral cycles.

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Without modernisation it will become increasingly challenging and unsustainable to conduct elections and to deliver accurate official results



Priority 3: **Building knowledge and trust**

What we mean

The objectives in the Electoral Act require us to ensure New Zealanders understand the electoral system and have trust and confidence in its administration. Maintaining a strong base of understanding, trust and confidence is essential to ensuring high levels of participation and trust in the legitimacy of election results, which facilitate the smooth transfer of power.

Ensuring trust is an outcome of many factors. It requires us to increase people's understanding, be transparent as an organisation about how we work, build strong relationships and tell the story of the importance of a high performing electoral system to New Zealand. It also means removing barriers that create distrust for some voters.

Why this is a priority

Building knowledge and trust is a priority because of a trend of declining trust in government and challenges to democracies internationally.

New Zealanders are regularly exposed to information of varying accuracy about international elections that may encourage them to question their own electoral system.

Building knowledge and trust will also help New Zealanders to accept future changes, as we modernise the electoral system, and implement policy changes that may be made, for instance a four-year term of Parliament. It is also possible that we may be asked to take on a different and much larger role in local elections.

What success looks like

By 2029 we will have:

- ✓ sought input to and communicated a clear plan for future elections to stakeholders and electors
- ✓ published updates on our work, the improvements we are making and why
- ✓ provided further advice and recommendations to government and policy makers on potential changes to the election model
- ✓ continued to support work across the Pacific to strengthen support for democratic elections in our region
- ✓ targeted education and knowledge building toward groups with lower involvement in the electoral system
- ✓ worked with communities to deliver election services in locations and in ways that increase trust in the election and its results
- ✓ built transparency and trust through proactively sharing information, data and insights about the election and the electoral system.

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Maintaining a strong base of understanding, trust and confidence is essential to ensuring high levels of participation and trust in the legitimacy of election results, which facilitate the smooth transfer of power

Our main activities

This section explains how our activities will contribute to achieving our strategic intentions.

Delivering elections and referendums

Our role

We are responsible for running parliamentary elections and referendums. The general election is one of New Zealand's largest public events and running it is a complicated logistical exercise. Our planning, preparation, delivery and review of a general election spans the three-year electoral cycle (see diagram on page 24).

We aim to deliver safe, reliable and cost-effective electoral events with voting services that all New Zealanders can access if they choose to do so and official results the public can have confidence in.

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The general election is one of New Zealand's largest public events and running it is a complicated logistical exercise



What we will do

Our focus will be on:

- strengthening controls that prevent and check for vote count errors
- reducing complexity and pressure in the post-election period (see strategic priority 1)
- delivering a robust and efficient 2026 General Election, including a referendum if required, that provides a good experience for voters implementing any legislative changes that will impact how we plan for and deliver electoral events in 2026 or future years
- developing an investment plan for election management technologies to improve the efficiency and timeliness of electoral processes and reduce the likelihood of errors (see strategic priority 2).

Providing enrolment services and maintaining electoral rolls

Our role

We provide online and paper-based enrolment processes for voters, aiming to make it as simple as possible for New Zealanders to register and keep their enrolment details current. We keep the electoral rolls up to date and accurate so all registered voters can take part in elections and elections run smoothly.

We also supply electoral rolls to local authorities for use in local elections and support local authorities with enrolment-related processes during local elections.



What we will do

As part of our work to strengthen our foundations (see strategic priority 1) we will be implementing improvements to our enrolment data integrity and assurance processes. We will also investigate opportunities to automate backend processes in our online enrolment platform and improve user experience. Where feasible, we will implement changes before the 2026 General Election.

Strategic priority 2 explains how we aim to start modernising enrolment services to increase enrolment levels and roll accuracy and remove pressure on the post-election period from enrolment activity.

Providing information and education about democracy, voting and enrolling

Our role

We provide information about the electoral system in a range of formats, tailored to meet the needs of different participants in the electoral system, such as prospective voters, candidates, parties, third-party promoters, media and members of parliament. In addition, we deliver online and face-to-face education activities, particularly in communities with lower levels of participation.

Some of our public information and education activities are ongoing, for instance those targeting New Zealanders who are turning 18 and becoming eligible to enrol or those moving address. We also run enrolment and Māori Electoral Option updates before general and local elections.



What we will do

We will target our information and education to groups and communities that have relatively low enrolment and participation rates. This includes Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic communities, disabled people and youth. We will work through existing organisations and a wide range of channels to reach these groups and ensure clear, politically neutral information is provided.

We will update our public information and key messages to reflect the impact of any legislative changes.

Administering electoral law

Our role

We have a role in upholding electoral law and ensuring election participants meet their obligations under the Electoral Act 1993. This includes ensuring that only eligible votes are counted, that political parties, candidates and others follow electoral finance and advertising rules, and that where required third-party promoters are registered. Our role includes providing guidance for participants to understand and meet their obligations, managing complaints and where applicable referring apparent breaches to Police.



What we will do

We will continue to look for opportunities to streamline our information, processes and systems to make it easier for people to meet their obligations. We will continue to manage compliance and investigate any non-compliance.

We will ensure that any legislative changes that will impact participants are communicated in a clear and timely manner and integrated into our processes and guidance.

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Our role includes providing guidance for participants to understand and meet their obligations, managing complaints and where applicable referring apparent breaches to Police

Three-year cycle

Our work revolves around a three-year cycle.

Year 1

In the year following a general election, we review our delivery, considering feedback from voters, candidates, parties, and others about their experiences. We determine strategic and operational priorities for the new cycle and begin the planning, design, and implementation of the next election, including advising on proposals for legislative reform.



Year 2

Our focus mid-cycle is on designing, testing, and improving systems and processes for the next general election to ensure they are fit for purpose. We procure our physical supplies, identify who we need to partner with, plan our recruitment activity, start recruiting regional managers and Electorate Managers, find headquarter properties, and, as necessary, redesign services to give effect to legislative changes.



Year 3

In the third year of the cycle, we start implementing our plans and temporary infrastructures and systems required for delivering the general election. We send out information on the Māori Electoral Option, enrolment, and voting, and run information and education campaigns. Extensive recruitment and training of a temporary workforce takes place, and voting places are set up throughout the country for the delivery of the election. This is the year we deliver the general election.



Throughout the three-year operating cycle, we also provide information and education to a wide range of community groups, schools, and others to promote electoral participation and understanding. We continually maintain the electoral rolls for local and parliamentary elections, which includes running an enrolment update campaign ahead of the three-yearly local elections.

What we need to manage well

This section explains how we will manage our resources to achieve our strategic intentions.

Our independence and reputation

Why this is important to us

Our independence and reputation are critical to ensuring the electoral system operates fairly and impartially, so that New Zealanders have trust and confidence in the electoral system. As distrust in government institutions and dissatisfaction with democracies increases internationally, it is vital that we maintain our reputation as independent and trustworthy.

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It is vital that we maintain our reputation as independent and trustworthy



What we will do

As part of our work to promote understanding and maintain confidence in the electoral system, we will publish more about who we are and what we do, using a range of channels to inform and educate New Zealanders. We have a strong, recognisable identity that we will continue to use in our communication and education activities.

We will provide impartial information and technical advice on the administration of the electoral system to support the decisions of policy makers, including the implications of proposed changes to different communities, and continue to ensure staff understand what is required to maintain neutrality in their work.

Our people

Why this is important to us

The capability of our people – both our permanent and temporary election workforces – underpins the performance of the organisation. We aim to build a healthy, safe, high-performing organisation that attracts, engages and retains talent.

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We aim to build a healthy, safe, high-performing organisation that attracts, engages and retains talent



What we will do

As we prepare for the 2026 General Election, we will streamline our recruitment systems and improve the effectiveness of our training materials and approach.

In 2024 we reviewed our people and culture and information technology areas to ensure we have the capability we need to deliver elections, support modernisation and prepare for future change. We will continue to grow our capability in these areas.

To ensure we have the right foundations in place to support our people, we plan to review a number of our people-related policies and processes. We will also review our health and safety guardrails, for both permanent and temporary staff.

Our relationships

Why this is important to us

Our relationships are critical to our work. We would not be able to deliver the general election, without significant support from other government agencies, our third-party suppliers and communities. Through our relationships we also gain insights into the needs of the diverse communities that we serve and reach people who are not currently enrolled or participating in voting.

Our relationships with electoral management bodies in Australia and the Pacific also influence the work we do. We discuss shared challenges and identify opportunities to improve or bring efficiencies to the way New Zealand's electoral system operates. We are also funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to deliver a programme of work to support our Pacific neighbours to run their electoral events.



What we will do

We will ensure we connect with organisations and groups who have existing relationships within communities and share similar goals. We will also ensure we are managing our relationships with third party suppliers to ensure reliable, fit for purpose and cost-effective services.

We will continue to work with our colleagues in Australian and Pacific electoral management bodies and gain insights into shared challenges and opportunities.

Our finances and assets

Why this is important to us

As an organisation whose key cost drivers are strongly impacted by inflation, effective financial management involves making some challenging decisions about how to invest our funding. It also involves making smart procurement decisions, and ensuring we have effective financial processes and controls in place.

Our key assets are our technology systems, including our core enrolment and election management systems, and the physical equipment and supplies that we procure and hold in readiness for elections. They are critical to running elections and delivering timely and accurate election results.



What we will do

We received a 'very good' ESCO rating from our external auditors for our financial systems and controls for the 2023/24 audit,⁶ an upgrade from 'good' that reflected the investment we had made in financial capability. We aim to maintain this performance.

As discussed under strategic priority 1, gaining greater certainty of future funding is a priority for us if we are to plan our core work effectively and investigate interventions needed to cost effectively manage increasing

volume and cost pressures. We will also continue to look for cost savings and efficiencies and be fiscally prudent.

Our current work ensures our ageing technology systems remain secure and stable. A business case for future technologies will inform a plan to improve use of our information systems, technology and cybersecurity.

We expect global supply chains to become increasingly lengthened and unreliable and will factor this into our procurement and storage plans for election supplies and equipment.

6. ESCO ratings are explained at: <https://oag.parliament.nz/about-us/what-we-do/about-auditing/esco>

Our information, data and processes

Why this is important to us

Continuing to improve our use of information and data and improve our delivery processes are both critical to our effectiveness. We need to ensure that information and data is accurate and authoritative, protected where appropriate, and able to be shared and reused where there is public value and sharing is permitted by law. We need a strong base of electoral and corporate processes that are streamlined, regularly reviewed and well understood.

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We need to ensure that information and data is accurate and authoritative, protected where appropriate, and able to be shared and reused where there is public value and sharing is permitted by law



What we will do

We will continue to focus on meeting good practice standards for information security and management, including cybersecurity, privacy and records management requirements. We have a comprehensive information management improvement plan in place that will help us to increase organisational maturity over the next three to four years and ensure we can take advantage of technologies that can bring greater efficiency to our practices. Alongside this, we will be developing a data strategy and an open data framework to help us to proactively share more of our information, including data that would be of value to Māori.

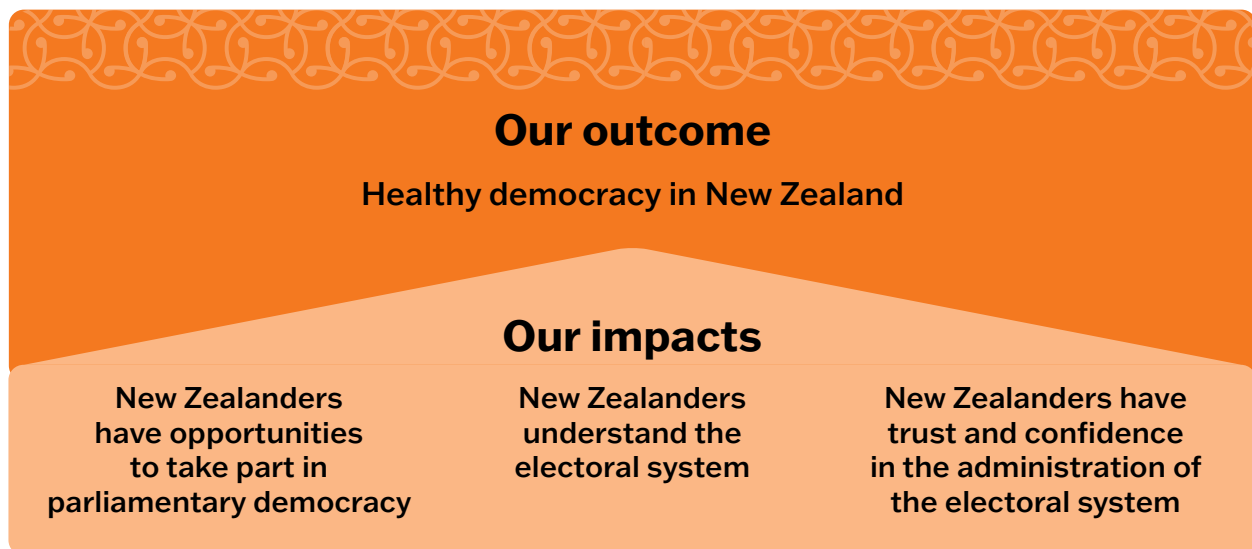
As discussed under strategic priority 1, we also have a focus on improving our electoral processes and controls, ensuring these are documented and that we have a process for managing changes.

Measuring our performance

Te ine i ā mātou mahi

This section outlines how we plan to measure our performance.

Measuring our outcome and impacts



Our outcome and impacts are the results we aim to achieve for New Zealand through our work. Our impacts are aligned with our statutory objectives.

In this section we explain why our outcome and impacts matter, how our activities contribute to or influence these outcomes and impacts, and how we measure performance.

Targets for these measures and further explanation will be included in our Statement of Performance Expectations and annual report each financial year.



Outcome:

Healthy democracy in New Zealand

Desired direction of travel: Maintain

Why this is important

A healthy democracy enables political, economic and social stability and protects the rights of citizens to be equal and to vote or stand for election to a governing body.

How our work contributes to this outcome

Free and fair elections are a key contributor to a healthy democracy. We aim to ensure all eligible New Zealanders can enrol and vote. Through our work we protect their rights to vote freely without fear or intimidation, to have their vote remain secret, and to have confidence that their vote will be counted and reported accurately.

How we will measure this outcome

We will monitor New Zealand's rankings in international democracy indexes, for instance the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Democracy Index,⁷ and include this as supporting information in our annual reports.



**Free and fair elections
are a key contributor to
a healthy democracy**

7. Reports are available at: <https://www.eiu.com/n/global-themes/democracy-index/>



Impact 1:

New Zealanders have opportunities to participate in parliamentary democracy

Desired direction of travel: Maintain or improve

Why this is important

A healthy democracy requires high participation rates by voters to legitimise the exercise of power by government.

Eligible New Zealanders have a democratic right to enrol and vote. They also have the right to run for the House of Representatives.

How our work contributes to this impact

To vote, New Zealanders must be enrolled. While voting is voluntary, it is compulsory to register (enrol) if you are eligible to do so.

We provide services that allow all eligible New Zealanders to enrol and keep their enrolment details current and provide them opportunities to vote. We achieve this through the design and delivery of our enrolment and voting services, through awareness campaigns, and ongoing information and education activities.

Other ways the Commission facilitates participation in parliamentary democracy are by:

- ✓ providing information for political parties and candidates and administering party registrations and candidate nominations
- ✓ administering the Election Access Fund that covers disability-related costs for disabled people seeking selection to be a candidate or campaigning as a candidate
- ✓ allocating and distributing broadcasting funding to registered political parties
- ✓ encouraging a diverse range of people to apply to work with us, including in temporary election roles.

How we will measure this impact

We monitor enrolment levels on an ongoing basis and set measures for all New Zealanders, as well as Māori and youth.⁸ In a general election year, we also measure both peak enrolment levels when enrolment closes for the election and voter turnout. We recently also set a measure for turnout at by-elections.

Frequency	Measure
Annual	Percentage of eligible population enrolled to vote (average for the period)
	Percentage of eligible 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled to vote (average for the period)
	Number of people of Māori descent enrolled to vote (average for the period) ⁹

Frequency	Measure
After a general election	Percentage of eligible population enrolled to vote on election night
	Percentage of eligible 18 to 24-year-olds enrolled to vote on election night
	Number of people of Māori descent enrolled to vote on election night
	Percentage of enrolled people who cast a vote
	Percentage of enrolled 18 to 24-year-olds who cast a vote
	Percentage of enrolled people of Māori descent who cast a vote
After a by-election	Percentage of enrolled people who cast a vote

8. We are interested in all groups with historically low levels of participation, which include Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic communities, disabled people and youth. Māori and youth are the only two of these groups we can identify from enrolment data, as the personal information we are allowed to collect with enrolments is limited.

9. The Commission does not receive population estimates for the number of eligible people of Māori descent so is unable to set a percentage target for people of Māori descent.



Impact 2:

New Zealanders have trust and confidence in the administration of the electoral system

Desired direction of travel: Maintain

Why this is important

Public trust and confidence in the electoral system is vital to a healthy democracy. Without trust and confidence people will not take part in elections or trust election results. Confidence and participation are closely related. High participation rates both require and reinforce people's confidence in the electoral system and election results. Personal and community experiences of participation likewise affect confidence.

How our work contributes to this impact

While there are many external factors that affect public confidence, we can influence confidence by ensuring we administer the aspects of the electoral system we are responsible for effectively and by maintaining our reputation as impartial and independent. Our approach to building confidence includes:

- ✓ providing public information about electoral processes and our work that is easy to understand, accessible and accurate
- ✓ building active and enduring relationships with communities across the country, particularly in communities with low levels of participation
- ✓ delivering enrolment and voting services that consider the needs of communities and ensuring elections run efficiently
- ✓ performing our compliance activities.

How we will measure this impact

We are now surveying a sample of voters and non-voters annually to monitor levels of understanding of enrolment and voting processes during and across electoral cycles. Prior to 2023/24 we only measured this once every three years, after each general election. Although we are setting annual measures and targets, we are still building our baseline understanding of how levels fluctuate during an electoral cycle.

Frequency	Measure
Annual	Percentage of surveyed eligible voters who have 'total or high' confidence the Electoral Commission conducts Parliamentary elections fairly in New Zealand
	Percentage of surveyed eligible voters who have 'total or high' confidence that Electoral Commission staff conduct Parliamentary elections impartially in New Zealand



Impact 3:

New Zealanders understand the electoral system

Desired direction of travel: Improve

Why this is important

Understanding how the electoral system works helps people to have confidence in the system and to take part.

How our work contributes to this impact

We help people to understand:

- ✓ why their vote matters
- ✓ how the electoral system works and contributes to healthy democracy in New Zealand
- ✓ when and how to enrol and vote and take part as candidates, political parties, third-party promoters or as part of our temporary workforce.

We promote understanding of the electoral system by:

- ✓ producing clear and accurate public information about the electoral system in a range of formats, which we share through our website and social media channels, public advertising campaigns, face-to-face and online education activities, and direct communications with registered voters
- ✓ developing and publishing guidance and information for candidates, parties and third-party promoters
- ✓ providing proactive information to media and responding to people who come to us with questions.

How we will measure this impact

We are now surveying a sample of voters and non-voters annually to monitor levels of understanding of enrolment and voting processes during and across electoral cycles. Prior to 2023/24 we only measured this once every three years, after each general election. Although we are setting annual measures and targets, we are still building our baseline understanding of how levels fluctuate during an electoral cycle.

Frequency	Measure
Annual	Percentage of survey respondents that report a good or very good understanding of the process for voting in New Zealand
	Percentage of survey respondents that report a good or very good understanding of the process for enrolment in New Zealand
	Percentage of people of Māori descent surveyed that demonstrate a good understanding of the Māori Electoral Option

Measuring our main activities



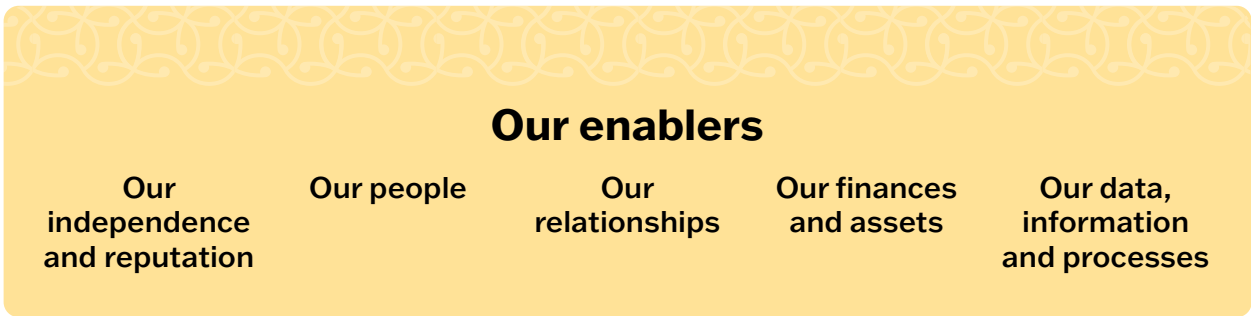
Through our **activities**, we deliver services and information to New Zealanders and contribute to achieving our impacts and outcome.

We monitor and measure the effectiveness and efficiency of our activities and the outputs they produce. Our definition of

effectiveness varies between activities and outputs depending on the results we are trying to achieve.

Performance measures, targets and further explanation will be included in our Statement of Performance Expectations and annual report each financial year.

Measuring our enablers



Our **enablers** are the resources we need to manage well so we can be effective both now and in the future.

Key metrics and supporting performance information will be included in our Statement of Performance Expectations and in our annual report each financial year.



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