

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (COUNCIL) DECISION-MAKERS

As well as electing people to represent us in central government, we also elect people to represent us in local government.

What's local government got to do with me?

Local governments provide many of the facilities you use every day. If you turned on a tap, got a book from the library or biked down a road, then you've used something provided by your local government.

Local government is made up of territorial authorities (district and city councils) and regional councils. Councils make decisions and set directions for promoting the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of their communities. They contribute to the good governance of their communities.

District and city councils provide:

- environmental health and safety (including building control, civil defence and environmental health matters)
- infrastructure (e.g. roading and transport, sewerage, water)
- recreation and culture
- resource management (including how land can be used and where buildings can go up)
- community wellbeing and development.

Many city and district councils also have youth councils.

Regional councils cover much bigger areas than city and district councils.

They work on:

- resource management (quality of water, soil, coastal planning)
- control of plant and animal pests (like possums)
- river management and controlling floods and erosion
- land transport planning and organising public transport (like bus services)
- civil defence (natural disasters, marine oil spills).

Some regional councils also have environmental youth councils.

Councils put their policies and plans out for communities to discuss and give feedback on. The two important plans a council creates for its community are:

- **THE LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN (LTCCP)** outlines the council's goals for the next 10 years and is reviewed every three years.
- **THE ANNUAL PLAN** is a yearly document that sets out the activities that the council intends to undertake in the next 12 months and how much it will cost.

How can you get your thoughts to council?

You may have seen an article or advertisement in the newspaper about your local council wanting public input on an issue or project.

If you have opinions about certain issues, it is important to let your local government decision-makers know. For example:

- 'I would like the library to upgrade its youth section'
- 'I think we should have a bike lane on the road by my school'
- 'I think we need better lighting around the skate park at night'.

If you want to have input into decisions about issues like these in your community you need to talk to either your city, district or regional council depending on the issue.

There are several ways you can participate in council decision-making process. They include:

- making submissions
- doing a petition
- speaking at a council meeting
- making submissions to the council's Annual Plan or LTCCP.

Councils have different processes and ways the community can get their views to council. Check with your city or district, and regional council for more information about how you can have your say.



Making a submission

Submissions can cover a wide range of things from how to deal with graffiti problems through to dealing with pollution at your local beach.

A submission is the presentation of your (or your group's) views or opinions about a matter currently under consideration by your local council.

You have the choice of making an oral or written submission. Whichever option you choose, make sure you:

- include your key points
- tell the council what you want – don't leave them to guess
- use clear, simple, everyday language.

There is usually there is a draft document you can read to get relevant information to help you make your submission.

Get your submission to the council before the closing date and time.

Make sure you state in your submission if you want to speak at a hearing. Speaking at a hearing can help to highlight what you said in your submission, but your submission is just as valid if you don't speak.

What not to do in your submission

Make sure that your submission does not:

- include any personal feelings you have about the council or its officers
- refer to issues or effects that are not related to the proposed plan or plan change.

How do I find out about council submissions?

Your council's website usually lists their current submissions.

If your council has a youth council, contact them for information on what submissions directly affect young people in your community.

Do a petition

If there is an issue you feel strongly about and want the council to change, a petition is an effective way for a number of people to express their opinions on an issue.

Important things to remember when doing a petition:

- Provide brief information about your petition and the reasons why people should sign it. For example, what would be the benefits for your community if your petition was successful?
- Be really clear about the reason for your petition and what you want the council to do.
- A petition needs to be received by someone with the power to do something about the issue and who is preferably sympathetic to the issue. Identify who the petition needs to be sent to and contact that person to make sure they will receive it for you.
- Present the petition to the council yourself or ask a councillor to present it on your behalf.

Speak at public meetings

Speaking at the various types of council meetings is one way for you to have your say on community issues to the mayor and councillors. The types of council meetings include:

- public meetings
- council committee meetings.

Some councils also have community boards that you can speak to. Community boards can also choose to take your issue to the council on your behalf.

Be prepared – councils follow formal meeting procedures, so make sure you find out the process of the meeting and any rules you need to know, e.g. when you are allowed to speak and for how long, and whether you will be asked any questions.

Be respectful, be clear and stick to the point.

For more information about local government, see their website at www.lgnz.co.nz.

**MAKE AN ORAL
OR WRITTEN
SUBMISSION**