



New Zealand Public Health and Disability (Waikato DHB) Elections Bill

145—1

Report of the Health Committee

June 2019

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Dr Shane Reti
Deputy Chairperson

New Zealand Public Health and Disability (Waikato DHB) Elections Bill

Recommendation

The Health Committee has examined the New Zealand Public Health and Disability (Waikato DHB) Elections Bill and recommends that the bill pass without amendment.

Purpose of the bill

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability (Waikato DHB) Elections Bill would exempt the Waikato District Health Board (DHB) from holding the DHB board election in the 2019 triennial election, as currently required by legislation.

In May 2019, the Minister of Health dismissed the board of the Waikato DHB because of serious dissatisfaction with its performance, particularly in relation to its financial position and service issues. The board was replaced by a Commissioner. Under the primary Act, the Commissioner may only hold office until the members of a board come into office after the next election. This bill would amend the primary Act to cancel the triennial election for 2019. This would allow enough time for the Commissioner to carry out her duties to the Minister's satisfaction. Under this bill, the Commissioner's role would be extended until the next Waikato DHB election in 2022.

Concerns about lack of democratic process

All three submitters were concerned about the loss of local representation that would result if the bill passed. We consider that the inability of the public to vote for representation on their DHB has been fairly balanced against the need for a Commissioner to address the governance, service, and financial issues with the DHB.

This bill would cancel only one election, and the constituents of the Waikato area would be able to vote in the 2022 election. The bill does not provide for a further extension.

Lack of Māori representation and participation

One submitter expressed concern about Māori health outcomes as a result of the dismissal of the two Māori representatives on the DHB board.

We are advised that the terms and conditions of the Commissioner's appointment make it explicit that the Commissioner is expected to focus on achieving equity for Māori. The Commissioner is still required to pursue the DHB's objective under the primary Act of reducing health disparities by improving health outcomes for Māori and other population groups.

We note that the Commissioner has appointed a Deputy Commissioner who has significant experience in Māori health. We also understand that the Commissioner is engaging with the Waikato Iwi Māori Council and Waikato Tainui.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability (Waikato DHB) Elections Bill was referred to the committee on 30 May 2019. The closing date for submissions was 10 June 2019. We received and considered three submissions from interested groups and individuals. We heard oral evidence from two submitters.

We received advice from the Ministry of Health.

Committee members

Louisa Wall (Chairperson)
Hon Maggie Barry
Dr Liz Craig
Matt Doocey
Jenny Marcroft
Dr Shane Reti
Angie Warren-Clark
Hon Michael Woodhouse

Advice and evidence received

The documents that we received as advice and evidence are available on the Parliament website, www.parliament.nz.