



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024

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## CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES: VOTING

THIS PAPER PROPOSES CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW ELECTRONIC MEANS TO BE USED FOR VOTING IN ELECTIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS (INCLUDING THE PRESIDENTIAL TEAM)



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1 That the paper be received.

2 That rule 51 (iv) (b) be changed from:

Where such a meeting is called it may by a two thirds majority of those present request the Executive to conduct a postal ballot of those entitled to vote in the electoral area on the matter of removal from office.

To:

Where such a meeting is called it may by a two thirds majority of those present request the Executive to conduct a ballot of those entitled to vote in the electoral area on the matter of removal from office.

3 That rule 51 (iv) (c) be changed from:

Such postal ballot shall be in the form of a motion of no-confidence in the Executive member or members shall be conducted in the same manner as Executive elections provided for under rules 62-76 and shall be held within twenty-eight days of receipt by the Secretary of the Region's request.

To:

Such ballot shall be in the form of a motion of no-confidence in the Executive member or members shall be conducted in the same manner as Executive elections provided for under rules 62-76 and shall be held within twenty-eight days of receipt by the Secretary of the Region's request.

4 That rule 64 (iii) (b) be changed from:

provide ballot papers in such number and such form as she/he shall deem requisite and suitable and

To:

ensure all eligible members are afforded the opportunity to participate in the ballot and

5 That rule 71 (i) be changed from:

Every member entitled to vote as herein before provided shall be entitled to exercise one vote only in each election and shall be given a voting paper by the returning officer with instructions on voting including the date by which votes must be returned.

To:

Every member entitled to vote as herein before provided shall be entitled to exercise one vote only in each election and shall be given the opportunity to do so by the returning officer with instructions on voting including the date by which votes must be returned.

6 That rule 71 (ii) be changed from:

Voting shall be held in Branches and the Secretaries thereof shall forward a statement of the results of such voting to the Returning Officer before a date to be specified by her/him PROVIDED that any member who so desires may post her/his sealed ballot paper directly to the Returning Officer by such date.

To:

All votes must be submitted to the Returning Officer before the advertised closing time and date.

7 That rule 74 (i) be changed from:

Where the candidate in any election is a candidate also for the office of President the Returning Officer shall issue ballot papers and instructions for preferential voting for the candidates.

To:

Where the candidate in any election is a candidate also for the office of President the Returning Officer shall include with the ballot instructions for preferential voting for the candidates.

8 That rule 77 be changed from:

All nomination forms, voting papers and other papers connected with any ballot or for any election for any officer in any branch, region or for the Executive shall be kept by that branch, region or by the Association's National Office for a minimum of one year.

To:

All nomination forms, voting records and other papers connected with any ballot or for any election for any officer in any branch, region or for the Executive shall be kept by that branch, region or by the Association's National Office for a minimum of one year.

9 That rule 79 (i) be changed from:

Any person eligible to vote in a ballot may apply to the Returning Officer for a special vote and such application shall be made at least 21 days before the day on which the ballot shall be held and shall set out the reasons for such application.

To:

Any person eligible to vote in a ballot may apply to the Returning Officer for a special vote and such application shall be made at least 21 days before the day on which the ballot closes and shall set out the reasons for such application.

10 That rule 79 (ii) be changed from:

If satisfied that the application is justified in the circumstances the Returning Officer shall issue a ballot paper to the applicant.

To:

If satisfied that the application is justified in the circumstances the Returning Officer shall issue a ballot to the applicant.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Each year we run a paper-based ballot process for Executive elections. The only exception was in 2021, where an electronic ballot was run because of Covid-19 restrictions. This is very much a time-consuming and manual process involving:
- Printing numbered voting papers (now completed offsite).
  - Producing membership lists for each branch that are up to date and have space to record the voting paper numbers.
  - Manually counting the correct number of papers for each branch/site and placing them, along with candidate information and instructions in a courier bag.
  - Courier out the voting papers.
  - Voting occurs in branches.
  - Results returned via email to the Returning Officer.
  - Results collated.
- 1.2 In 2023, this process cost approximately \$22,350 plus the cost of staff time (approximately 30 hours). In 2022, this process cost approximately \$24,500 plus staff time.

## 2. PROPOSAL TO ALLOW ELECTRONIC VOTING

- 2.1 This paper proposes a change to the constitution that will allow voting for the Executive elections to be done using an electronic voting system. The changes proposed will allow for the use of a paper-based ballot if at some point that is necessary or more appropriate.
- 2.2 An approach was made to ElectionNZ, who we used for ballots relating to collective bargaining and for the 2021 Executive elections, to provide a quote based on the 2023 election. Their quotes are always an estimate, because the final cost is determined by the number of calls that they receive from people who have difficulty voting (do not receive information, perhaps because they are not a member, or can't log in to vote). They estimate that the 2023 executive election would have cost \$16,250. Not only is this a saving in terms of actual cost, but it will also reduce some of the PPTA Te Wehengarua staffing costs.
- 2.3 However, cost is not the only concern here. This is also about ensuring a democratic process. Utilising an external provider like ElectionNZ reduces the risk of accusations of vote rigging or tampering. It provides assurance to members of a truly independent, democratic process.
- 2.4 There are a number of advantages to changing to an electronic voting system. These include:
- Ensures a rigorous democratic process.
  - Allows PPTA Te Wehengarua to update email addresses between collective negotiation rounds, ensuring that our membership information is up-to-date and improve accuracy of communications more generally.
  - Reduces environmental impact – both in terms of printing and courier delivery of papers.
  - Cheaper.

- Overcomes the challenge of branches without officials, where sometimes voting papers are not distributed – there are some entire branches that have not voted in elections in the past.
- Makes it much easier for members on leave, at schools with multiple sites and at schools that act as hubs (e.g. for RTLBs) to participate in voting. This will eliminate the need for a branch official to distribute papers out to members off site.
- Reduces the risk of all the votes of a branch being recorded as a single vote based on how the paperwork is completed.

2.5 There are also some disadvantages to moving to an electronic voting system:

- Changes the nature of an organising activity – instead of meeting and voting together it could involve meeting and BYO device to vote. This could be addressed through branch officer training.
- Potentially lower returns – in 2021 the return rate for the online vote was 12.36%. This was held at a time when Covid was active, lockdowns were creating stress, and it may be that priorities lay elsewhere. It is possible that if we ran an online election now, the return rate might be higher, as since 2021 members have become more used to online voting. While numbers vary from year to year (often depending upon how contentious an election or a candidate is), the return rate is usually between 25 and 30% for a paper-based election. A notable exception was in 2002, when the return rate was just over 50%. The figures for the 2023 election were approximately 28% return for the presidential vote and 27% return for the JVP vote. The regional returns were slightly lower. By comparison the recent online ballot for the settlement of the STCA had a return rate of over 80%.

### 3. PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

3.1 The proposed changes to the constitution allow for the use of an electronic voting system. They will also allow for the use of a paper ballot if at some time that is more appropriate.

3.2 Highlighting is used below to indicate the proposed changes.

3.3 That rule 51 (iv) (b) be changed from:

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