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9 March 2022

Jim Palmer
Chair
The Future of Local Government Review Panel

Tēnā koe Jim

I am writing to you and your committee on behalf of Trust Democracy, a nationwide organisation with a growing membership committed to strengthening public discourse, education, and research on democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Part of our mission is to help create spaces for everyday people to engage with one another in deliberative dialogue about our democracy and how it could be improved. The results of these dialogues inform Trust Democracy's education and advocacy work.

We wrote to you in June 2021 to support the future of local government review, introduce Trust Democracy and to recommend that the Panel consider contemporary governance models that use deliberative democracy approaches to achieve participation, inclusion, and equality in local government agenda setting and decision making. Since then, we note that the OECD has published further advice on ways to institutionalise representative deliberative processes as well as minimum standards and criteria for evaluation.¹

We are pleased to see from your website that the Panel has engaged with The newDemocracy Foundation (nDF), which has sponsored and evaluated many deliberative processes in Australia and developed an extremely robust, participatory, inclusive citizens' jury model. To enable public deliberation on the future of local government in New Zealand, we would strongly encourage you to use the nDF's citizens' jury approach.

If this is not possible, we would still encourage you to use deliberative approaches - on an issue as complex as the future of local government, simply consulting the public through submission or standard survey methods will not give the Panel a sense of what an informed and considered public would recommend.

To this end, Trust Democracy would like to offer the Panel its recently published choicebook: [Our Local Councils: Are people having enough say on what happens in their area?](#)² It was developed to support 2-to-3 hour workshops using the [National Issues Forums](#)³ (NIF) deliberative method. This method has been used for over 40 years in the USA and has also been used successfully in New Zealand with Māori, Pacific and mixed groups of people by Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council and the Wellington City Council. Two of our members were responsible for planning and implementing these processes.

¹ See <https://bit.ly/3Kl2Eef> or <https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm>

² See <https://bit.ly/3v1vLEh> or <https://trustdemocracy.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Our-local-councils.pdf>

³ See <https://www.nifi.org/>

We would be very happy to meet with the Panel if it is interested in discussing how a NIF method could be used to support a national conversation about the core issues of representation, agenda setting and decision making in face-to-face and online settings.

We look forward to your response.

Ngā mihi, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Wright", with a long horizontal line underneath.

Simon Wright
Secretary
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