



Lower the voting age
E whakaheke te tau pōti

About us

We are a youth-led, non-partisan campaign aiming to uplift and strengthen youth voice by extending the voting age to 16.

We have now become a nation-wide group of people passionate about making it 16.



Who are we?

Why should the voting age be lowered?

- We believe that issues that disproportionately affect young people, need young people at the decision making table
- We believe that more than ever, young people have proven themselves to care enough about this democracy in order to participate in it
- Young people are able to make decisions that can affect the course of their lives but are not given the agency to change their future

Our story so far

Make It 16 began in 2019, during Youth Parliament, where all parties agreed that the voting age should be extended.

Lowering the voting age was also a big topic discussed during Youth Parliament 2022, where we had more than half of all Youth MPs sign an open letter in support of lowering the voting age to 16.



Our story so far

We launched our first petition in 2020 and handed it in, in September this year, with 7,500 signatures.

Kate Sheppard's first petition only had 9,000 signatures so the fact that we were so close to their effort was a big achievement for us.



Our story so far

In June this year, we handed in our first open letter with 72+ signatures from local councillors and mayors, and local board members across the country.

Ginny Anderson, MP for Hutt South and Chairperson of the Justice Select Committee accepted the letter.



Our story so far

Over 2022 we have grown the campaign volunteer base.

We have regional hubs in Tāmaki Makaurau and Te Whānganui-a-Tara, and we're supporting people in Christchurch and Northland.

During our birthday month earlier in the year, in September, to do some grassroots campaigning and to get more petition signatures.



Our Court case

The basis of our court case is...

The Electoral Act 1993 and Local Electoral Act 2001 says everyone 18 years or older has the right to vote.

Yet the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990 says our right to be free from age discrimination commences from the age of 16.

Therefore the voting age of 18 is in breach of 16 year-olds right to be free from age discrimination.

The voting age has to be demonstrably justified, yet as we know there are many more reasons to justify a voting age of 16 than one of 18.

We were seeking a Declaration of Inconsistency, which is basically an announcement from the courts telling Parliament this is a serious breach of human rights, and that they need to fix it.

Our Court case

We first filed in the High Court back in 2019, and we got a decision from Justice Doogue in late 2020. Unfortunately, while she decided there was age discrimination she found that discrimination was justified.

Back then there were a few different faces to the campaign - after three years, more volunteers have joined us and we've passed the baton on to younger members.



Our Court case

There is a documentary that follows our journey taking this case to the high court.

Here's a link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSWM85jFGFc>



Our Court case

We then appealed to the Court of Appeal.

In that case we... almost won. The 3 judges on the case found that there **was** age discrimination and that the Government had not justified it (disagreeing with the High Court on the second point).

Basically, they agreed with our key arguments BUT they decided they had the discretion to decline to issue the formal declaration of inconsistency. In other words, while there was age discrimination, they decided they didn't have to formally say that. The reason they gave is that it is simply too political for the Courts.

Our Court case

The Supreme Court heard our case in July 2022. After a very quick four months they announced their judgment in November. The Supreme Court ruled that preventing 16 and 17 year-olds from voting is unjustified age discrimination in breach of the Bill of Rights. WE HAD WON!

On the same day the Government announced its intention to put a Bill to make the voting age 16 before Parliament.



Early signs suggest Labour keen on lower voting age



By [Thomas Coughlan](#)

22 Nov, 2022 11:27 AM 4 mins to read

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Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern supports lowering the voting age - most of her party agrees with her. Photo / Mark Mitchell

New Zealand Supreme Court rules voting age of 18 is discriminatory

© 21 November



Ardern promises bill to lower voting age to 16 in New Zealand after discrimination ruling

We were stoked!! There was also a lot of media attention, even globally, our co-directors Sanat and Caeden had many interviews!



Make It 16 campaign co-director on appeal to lower voting age to 16



Supreme Court rules in favour of 'Make It 16' to lower voting age



@makeit16nz

Sanat Singh

Make it 16 Co-Director

REPORTS OF CYBER INCIDENTS BACK TO NORMAL LEVELS AFTER RECORD FIRST QUARTER

ton 16° Wellington 15° Nelson 17° Blenheim 17° Kaitiaki 7.08 am



BEEHIVE DIVIDED OVER SUPREME COURT SUPPORT OF LOWER VOTING AGE

Gore 19° Invercargill 18° 7:40 ALAN CARR JOINS THE SHOW 8:1 7.22 am

The Bill

To change the voting age for general elections the bill would require a 75% supermajority, which poses a challenge for us to continue raising awareness and lobbying all politicians' support as we will need both the Labour Party and the opposition National Party to vote yes.

However, to change the voting age for local body elections only a simple 51% majority is required, which, with the support of almost all of the Labour Party as well as the Green Party and Te Pāti Māori, we will very likely have enough support for this to pass.

The Bill

We are currently calling on Cabinet Ministers to allow a vote on just lowering the voting age for local elections. We have sent an open letter to all local body members across the country to sign in support of this option too.

We've seen overseas that many countries have lowered the voting age for local elections first and support has then grown to lower it for general elections. This is our goal.

Porirua council to be asked to back lower voting age, others may follow suit

Justin Wong · 05:00, Nov 30 2022



Porirua City Council has voted to endorse the Make It 16 campaign.

BRUCE MACKAY/STUFF

16-year-olds will vote in 2025 local body elections, Wellington councillor and mayor reckon

Tom Hunt · 05:00, Dec 01 2022



Wellington's Mayor and the Wellington City councillor who helped start the Make it 16 campaign are optimistic 16-year-olds will vote in the 2025 local body elections as her council throws its weight behind the cause.

Our Next Steps

What are the next steps for the campaign?

- **Local Elections vs General Elections**
- **2023 General Election**
- **Lead up to the 2025 Local Elections**
- **Regional Campaign Hubs**



How do young people experience our democracy?

- Institutional Pathways
- Protests
- Community Organising
- Civics Education
- How does a lower voting age enhance all of these ideas?



How can you support us?

- Join our mailing list
- Donate to us
- Help us get into spaces we usually don't have access to
- When given the opportunity, help us raise awareness and change minds!



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Any further questions?