

21/05/2025

Committee Secretariat  
Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

## **Submission: Juries (Age of Excusal) Amendment Bill**

Tēnā koe

Age Concern New Zealand (ACNZ) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the *Juries (Age of Excusal) Amendment Bill*.

There are a growing number of people aged 65 years and older in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within ten years the over 65 population is expected to reach 1.2 million, with the over 85 age group being the fastest growing. <sup>1</sup>

Over 65s are also increasingly diverse with Māori, Pasifika and Asian older populations growing at a faster rate than European / Pakeha seniors. Within ten years there is expected to be approximately 928,000 older European or other New Zealanders and 109,400 older Māori.

Age Concern New Zealand is committed to positive ageing and valuing the experience and contribution of older people within families, workplaces and communities. Our focus is on dignity and respect toward older people and valuing their contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **About Age Concern New Zealand**

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Age Concern New Zealand is a trusted charity working in local communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand to support older people, their friends and whānau. We have 29 local Age Concerns operating in 40 locations throughout the country and a national office based in Wellington.

Our strategic goal is:

*Every older person feels connected, has positive choices and can age well.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://officeforseniors.govt.nz/better-later-life-strategy/> po

Our values of Dignity. Wellbeing. Equity and Respect for older people are our guiding lights and underpin everything we do.

Our core services include advocacy and public awareness, social connection, health promotion, elder abuse and neglect prevention, and providing support through expert information, advice and referrals.

As such, we provide the following feedback on proposed changes to the age at which a person has the right to be automatically excused from jury service on the basis of their age.

### Age Concern New Zealand's feedback

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#### **Our comments**

1. We agree with the comments in the general policy statement regarding the increasing number of over 65s in Aotearoa, the changing social dynamics and the increasing number of New Zealanders aged 65 and above who continue to be in paid employment.
2. We also recognise the significant contribution of older carers and volunteers who contribute hugely to their households and communities.
3. We acknowledge the huge value and life experience the 65+ cohort can continue to bring to jury service should they so choose.
4. This recognises the value and diversity that any juror of 18 years and above can bring to the court system.
5. We also recognise the pressure on court systems and the need to have a sufficient jury pool available.
6. We anticipate that changing the age threshold for juror excusal would increase the pool of potential jurors,

#### **Our recommendations**

1. We support an increase to the juries age of excusal; however, we recommend the increase is to age 70 years rather than the proposed age of 72. This change would align with the age of retirement for Judges.

We understand that since 2016, Judges can choose to continue to be appointed as an acting Associate Judge beyond the age of 70, however, this is based on their personal choice to do so.

We believe that potential jurors aged 70 or above should also have the right to choose to be automatically excused from jury service on the basis of age, unless they choose to make themselves available

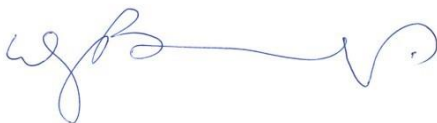
2. We recommend that a user friendly and timely excusal process is available to older people who no longer wish to be called up for jury service.

### Closing comment

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Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our feedback on the consultation by the Ministry of Justice on age-related excusal from jury service provisions. We have a keen interest in the outcome of the consultation and appreciate being able to comment. We are happy to talk with you further on this topic or to clarify any of our comments.

Nāku Noa, nā,



Karen Billings-Jensen  
Chief Executive  
Age Concern New Zealand