

30 August 2025

Committee Secretariat
Governance and Administrative Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Submission on the Public Service Amendment Bill

Tēnā koutou katoa

Age Concern New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the *Public Service Amendment Bill*. This Bill is relevant to all New Zealanders and to Age Concern New Zealand and its work with older people. The Public Service plays an active role in people's lives as well as contributing to the development and implementation of public policy impacting us all.

We commend the Government for wanting to improve the effectiveness of the Public Service, no one could argue with that goal. However, we are unsure how the Amendment Bill would achieve that goal.

A return to basics has been spoken of in proposing the Amendment Bill. We contend that a commitment to long-term planning, promoting inclusiveness, acting in the public interest, encouraging the public's active participation in society and democratic processes, and achieving pay equity are all basic functions of the government and the public service. And yet, the Amendment Bill seeks to remove these foundational concepts from legislation.

On that basis, we do not support the Public Service Amendment Bill as it currently stands.

About Age Concern New Zealand

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 39 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.

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.

We are proud of our heritage in standing up for the rights of older New Zealanders for more than 50 years.

Our Comments

1. Older New Zealanders rely on the Public Service to engage with them and deal with issues relevant to them in the spirit of mutual respect, fairness, knowledge and insight. Services particularly relevant for older people include those delivered by Work and Income, Ministry of Social Development, Office for Seniors, Ministry of Health, Kāinga Ora, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Transport. These and other arms of the Public Service deal amongst other things with New Zealand superannuation, SuperGold card, health care, aged care services, transport, elder abuse prevention, housing policy, and retirement policies.
2. There are a growing number of people aged 65 years and older in Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Stats NZ, in 2024 there were 870,000 to one million people aged 65 and above.¹ Within ten years the over 65 population is expected to reach 1.2 million, with the over 85 age group being the fastest growing.²
3. We believe that all New Zealanders have the right to expect the Public Service to act with integrity, fairness and to have the best interests of New Zealand and New Zealanders underpinning its policies, plans and actions. Through our work with older people, we know that many New Zealanders aged 65 plus respect and trust the Public Service to do what is right for them and future generations.
4. We recognise that policy development and implementation are complicated and that there are many competing voices and priorities. We therefore recommend that core values such as social justice, fairness, equity, long term benefit and the public interest explicitly and transparently underpin the decisions and work of the Public Service.
5. Over 65s are increasingly diverse with Māori, Pasifika and Asian older populations growing at a faster rate than European/Pakeha seniors. We consider that retaining a commitment to diversity in Public Service recruitment will mean staff can best meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population through stronger cultural understanding.

¹ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/national-population-projections-2024base2078/#:~:text=Key%20facts,and%201.09%20million%20in%202031.>

² <https://officeforseniors.govt.nz/better-later-life-strategy/>

6. We note that the Amendment Bill seeks to make changes to roles and responsibilities for Long Term Insight Briefings. According to the Public Service Commission these briefings “aim to be ‘think pieces’ on the future, providing information about medium and long-term trends, risks and opportunities that may affect Aotearoa New Zealand.”³ Age Concern New Zealand has found the Briefings informative and helpful in respect to issues affecting older people. We would like to see the Briefings remain developed and informed by the respective departments and made available to the public.

Our Recommendations

1. We do not support the passing of the Public Service Amendment Bill as it currently stands.
2. Retain reference to supporting future governments, pursuing long-term interests and enabling active citizenship within the purpose of the Act.
3. Retain good employer obligations in the Act that refer to achieving pay equity and reducing or eliminating discrimination and bias.
4. Retain in the Act the requirement for Public Service Chief Executives and the Public Service Commissioner to promote diversity and inclusion in the Public Service. This will mean the Public Service workforce better reflects New Zealand’s diverse population
5. Ensure that Long-term Insight Briefings remain sitting with Government Departments and are made public to enhance knowledge and planning by other organisations.

Closing Comment

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission on the *Public Service Amendment Bill*, we are very interested in the outcome of the consultation process.

Nāku noa, nā



Karen Billings-Jensen
Chief Executive
Age Concern New Zealand

³ <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/publications/long-term-insights-briefings>