

# Auckland Transport ELECTION YEAR POLICY

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## Preamble

1. This policy applies during a local government election year.
2. This policy is based on the general principles for central and local government organisations during an election year<sup>1</sup>, which are also relevant to CCOs as part of the wider Auckland Council group.

## Who does this policy apply to?

3. This policy applies to all Auckland Transport employees and members of the Auckland Transport board.

## When does this policy apply?

4. This policy applies in any year in which a local government election will be held. In such a year, this policy applies during the pre-election period as defined in Schedule 1 and at any time in which matters covered in this policy are at issue.

## Advice and Support

5. Employees and Board members are encouraged to seek advice to address any issues which may arise during the election year. Advice and support is available from:
  - *Chairman (for Board members)*
  - *Chief Executive, General Manager Communications, General Manager People and Services (for employees)*

## Neutrality of employees and board members

6. A major characteristic of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements is that public servants are apolitical. As CCOs are part of the Auckland Council group the same principles may be applicable, in the public's mind, to CCO employees and board members.
7. During the pre-election period, increased public attention to the way CCOs carry out their functions is likely. Employees and board members need to act and be seen to act with political neutrality.

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<sup>1</sup> These include the Office of the Auditor General and the State Service Commission.

8. The actions of employees and board members must not detract from their ability to work with politicians, regardless of their political views.
9. Having a heightened awareness of the need to be seen to act with political neutrality does not mean the work of Auckland Transport is disrupted. It does mean however, that during an election year and particularly during the pre-election period, additional care must be taken to ensure that activities are not seen, in any way, to support or preference one candidate over another.
10. This is particularly important with respect to activities such as media relations, advertising campaigns, responding to Local Government and Official Information Act requests, interaction with electoral candidates, public speaking engagements, programme and strategy launches and promotions, and the release of discussion documents. Particular principles applying to these activities are provided below.

### **Participation in political activities as individuals**

11. CCO employees and board members have the same political rights and freedoms as other New Zealanders, but must maintain the political neutrality as employees/board members are required to work with current or future elected members. Auckland Transport employees and board members are entitled to be members of political parties.
12. Those employees with regular contact with elected members should exercise particular care and judgment in relation to their personal political activities to ensure the maintenance of political neutrality in their professional capacity.
13. Employees considering standing as candidates in local government elections must advise their managers at the earliest opportunity. If an employee nominates his or herself for election they will be required to take leave (either paid or unpaid depending on leave accrual etc) until after the official declaration of the election result. Employees who are elected are required to resign after being sworn in for local government office, to ensure no conflict of interest arises.

### **General business of Auckland Transport continues during pre-election period**

14. The normal business of council and its CCOs continues during an election year, including during the pre-election period. The pre-election period for the 2013 local government elections is defined in Schedule 1.
15. During the pre-election period a heightened level of media and public scrutiny about council's decisions and business can be expected. During this period, the Board may choose to take these into consideration prior to any decisions affecting policy or major investment.

### **Guidelines regarding election campaigning**

16. Auckland Transport employees in the course of their employment, and Board members in their role as directors of the board (other than councillors appointed by

the governing body), are not permitted to work on, or be engaged in any campaigning material or activities which may assist a candidate's campaign.

### **Use of Auckland Transport resources for communication**

17. Auckland Transport resources means: (CCO's) human resources; budgets; and (CCO) owned or controlled property and other resources; including information technology and telecommunications devices. (CCO's) policies regarding the acceptable uses of computers and telephones will apply during the pre-election period.
18. The use of Auckland Transport communication resources for election purposes is unacceptable. Auckland Transport must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the election prospects of a sitting member or any candidate for election.
19. Particular care will be exercised in the use of Auckland Transport resources for communications to ensure that they do not unreasonably raise, or could have the effect of unreasonably raising, the personal profile of any candidate for election. This will include consideration of the tone, content and style of any communication to ensure that it is factual, accurate, complete, fair and politically neutral.
20. Photographs of elected members, mayoral and members' columns in Auckland Transport publications (including for example the Annual Report), and advertorials, will be suspended during the pre-election period.

## **Schedule 1**

Relevant dates for the 2013 local government elections are below:

<b>Key dates for local government elections in 2013</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>12 July</b>	<b>Pre-election period commences</b>	
<b>19 July<sup>2</sup></b>	Candidate nominations open. Electoral roll opens for inspection	Currently 26 July
<b>2 August<sup>3</sup></b>	Pre-election report to be completed and published	Currently 9 August
<b>16 August<sup>4</sup></b>	Candidate nominations close (12 noon). Electoral roll closes	Currently 23 August
<b>21 August<sup>5</sup></b>	Public notice of candidate names	Currently 28 August
<b>20-25 September</b>	Voting documents delivered	
<b>12 October</b>	Voting closes (12 noon). Preliminary results announced	
<b>14-23 October</b>	Final results declared	
<b>November</b>	Elected members sworn in	New council commences

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<sup>2</sup> This date will apply if the Local Electoral Amendment Bill has passed and is operative.

<sup>3</sup> This date will apply if the Local Electoral Amendment Bill has passed and is operative.

<sup>4</sup> This date will apply if the Local Electoral Amendment Bill has passed and is operative.

<sup>5</sup> This date will apply if the Local Electoral Amendment Bill has passed and is operative.