



**Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi  
I New Zealand Public Service Association**

**“PSA Submission – Auckland Council Annual  
Budget 2023/2024”**

**March 2023**

## About the PSA

Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi | The New Zealand Public Service Association ('the PSA') is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 85,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities), state-owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services, and community sectors.

The PSA represents approximately 24,000 members who live and work in the Tāmaki Makaurau region, over 3000 of whom work for the Auckland Council and its agencies. All of our members have a strong interest, as residents of Tāmaki Makaurau, in this year's Annual Budget and its aspirations and intentions. Those members employed by Auckland Council and its agencies have an additional interest in how the Budget will affect their jobs and working conditions.

This submission has been prepared by local PSA members and delegates who work for Auckland Council.

## Overview of our submission

*“In tough times, austerity measures never work. The city will only be the poorer if the proposed cost-cutting outlined in the draft budget plan for 2023/24 are carried out.”*

- Bronwyn Maxwell, PSA Assistant Secretary Local Government

The PSA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion about Auckland Council's Annual Budget 2023/2024 ("the Budget") in line with our partnership agreement between Auckland Council and the PSA.<sup>1</sup>

Given the spread and nature of PSA's membership described above, we are in a unique position from which to comment and contribute as we seek to maintain, strengthen, and develop our constructive relationship with Auckland Council. In addition to being employees, our members and their whanau are also: residents, ratepayers, politically active citizens, and service users within Tāmaki Makaurau. Hence this submission is developed using these perspectives.

Our submission is guided by the following premises:

- The significant cost of living increases now and into the foreseeable future are causing our members and employees of the council significant financial strain which is having adverse impacts on their quality of life and well-being.
- The Local Government Act 2002 makes it clear that local authorities have wide-ranging responsibilities to pursue the four well-beings – social, economic, cultural, and environmental - for the benefit of their communities. We believe that a proactive pursuit of these needs to be maintained in the widest context.

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<sup>1</sup> The Auckland Council Public Service Association Pledge (March 2018)

- Retaining employees, their institutional knowledge and organisational loyalty is vital to ensure that local government organisations can meet their responsibilities and continue to provide high levels of service to our communities.
- Local government provides essential services to diverse groups throughout our communities. Within New Zealand, no local authority can match the scope, scale or importance of the services provided by Auckland Council and its CCOs.
- The reality of climate change is no longer deniable – it is already here! The PSA is committed to a just transition that requires climate mitigation and climate adaptation measures to be fair and equitable to affected employees and their communities.
- Strong vibrant local government is essential to a healthy and well-functioning civil society.

As the introductory quote by our Assistant Secretary for Local Government makes plain, the PSA’s position is austerity as an economic strategy especially for local government is both a flawed and unwarranted direction. The proposal risks causing permanent and structural harm to Tāmaki Makaurau to both kaimahi and our communities especially women and women of colour. Because of their important many services which if reduced or stopped now would need to return in the near future at a likely higher financial and opportunity cost.

In light of this, it is our view that operating revenues have not been properly increased to match the current expenditure levels. As such, this ‘lever’ remains our preferred general option as opposed to reducing operational expenditure. From our unique relationship and involvement within the council, current operations appear to be already significantly **lean and efficient** if not also under-resourced. This indicates that any further decreases in expenditure will necessarily start to cut into critical functions and services the council is

required to provide, let alone the likely adverse impacts on employees' basic workplace conditions. That said, we are open to selling off council-owned golf courses as they do not clearly provide any critical social service and tend to be utilised by smaller and usually more well-off members of the public both as means of addressing the council's budget deficit as well as open the land up for urban housing development.

One immediate area of concern for the PSA about this Budget is the potential adverse implications the proposals have on key services, events, projects, and strategies arising out of its Long-Term Plan (and its statutory obligations) for Māori and Pasifika kaimahi and their communities. A specific example of this is the PSA and council agreement to engage Southern Initiative's Uptempo over the next 18 months to assess our workplaces' capability around Māori and Pasifika. This critical work sought by the PSA is needed by the council to understand and lift workplace outcomes for Māori and Pasifika but is something that appears to be in jeopardy on the proposed operating spending reductions.

Our feedback to the substantive questions is as follows.

### Summary of our responses to the consultation questions

<p><a href="#"><u>Question 1</u></a></p>	<p>The PSA submits <b>Do not proceed with any reductions and instead further increase rates and/or debt.</b></p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Question 2</u></a></p>	<p>The PSA submits <b>Don't change the policy, keep all our shares and further increase rates and/or debt.</b></p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Question 3</u></a></p>	<p>The PSA submits <b>Other - Set higher general rates increase and/or make greater use of debt.</b></p>

<a href="#"><u>Question 4</u></a>	The PSA submits <b>Proceed with the proposal to increase our operating budget by around \$20 million each year.</b>
<a href="#"><u>Question 5</u></a>	The PSA has <b>No Response</b> to Question 5 (refer to our feedback in Question 1 Proposal C)
<a href="#"><u>Question 6</u></a>	The PSA <b>Supports</b> all increases to all five of the proposed Waste and Other Rates Charges
<a href="#"><u>Question 7</u></a>	<p>The PSA provides feedback on other matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Living Wage accreditation</i></li> <li>• <i>Pay equity.</i></li> <li>• <i>Lowering voting age to 16- and 17-year-olds</i></li> <li>• <i>Workload</i></li> <li>• <i>Annual Budget process</i></li> </ul>

## Council PSA membership survey results

In anticipation of preparing this submission, the PSA team within the council conducted a short survey of our membership as to their views of the proposed Budget.

Some key results include:

- 37% of respondents expected their roles to be adversely impacted by the Budget proposals with 47% replying ‘Don’t Know/Not Sure’ – indicating a widespread perception by a large section of the workforce consider that their work will or may be impacted.

- A significant majority of respondents (60%) supported a higher level of rate increases than what is proposed by the Budget *if it meant fewer services and roles would be cut/reduced*.
- 41% were against the council selling its shares in Auckland Airport with 31% in favour.
- Common responses from members in the long form answer section include:
  - Concern and worries about their and other jobs at the council particularly regarding possible disestablishments and unsustainable increases to existing workloads.
  - Recognition that the Budget proposals would broadly negatively impact Tāmaki Makaurau’s vulnerable and communities-of-need due to specific proposals reducing or stopping key community services tied to supporting such communities.
  - Supporting the sale of council-owned golf courses.
  - A few criticisms directed at the current Mayor particularly about his recent comments regarding replacing library staff with volunteers. Comments often came with attached requests and invites for the Mayor (and Elected Members) to directly engage with staff to better understand their roles, duties, and the nature of the day-to-day work.
  - Calls for more investment and funding into climate change and environmental projects and initiatives.

## Question 1 - Operating Spending Reductions

For this question, PSA submits **“Do not proceed with any reductions and instead further increase rates and/or debt”** with our reasoning below for each of the four sub-proposals.

**Proposal A: Auckland Council – Saving \$20 million across a range of regional, community and social services.**

We oppose Proposal A and the proposed \$20 million reduction proposed should not occur.

The supporting information for Proposal A noted a risk of losing staff with specific skills and capabilities. It also noted the risk of loss of services that cannot easily be reinstated.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that these cuts would have far-reaching effects that reduce the council's ability to deliver for the people of Tāmaki Makaurau for years to come.

Services that are under threat from this proposal cut across all of the four well-beings and means Tāmaki Makaurau will be materially worse off with particularly adverse impacts likely to be felt by women, particularly Maori and Pasifika and other vulnerable communities where they are currently supported by or reliant on council services.

Some services likely to be affected include:

- Services that promote economic well-being by reducing inequity within the community and looking after our most vulnerable people (e.g. education services, social services, youth programmes, youth centres, programmes for marginalised communities).
- Services that promote social and cultural well-being by building community connectedness (e.g. arts and culture programmes, regional events, community gardens, marae development).



- Services that promote environmental well-being by giving people the tools to address urgent environmental problems at the community level (e.g, environmental education, and climate action initiatives).

The council may default in its statutory obligation to deliver on the four well-beings to Tāmaki Makaurau should the above occur.

### Proposal B: Auckland Council – Reduction in Regional Contestable Grants

We oppose Proposal B and no reduction in the Regional Contestable Grants should occur.

As the supporting information on the proposed budget notes, “typically, grant funding is leveraged to provide greater value to Aucklanders than the grant amount by itself could achieve.” It also pointed out that an unknown amount of work currently carried out by community groups through grants would need to be picked up by the council instead.<sup>2</sup> Overall the adverse impacts of this proposal far outweigh the minimal impact it would have on reducing the budget deficit.

Community groups will be impacted by this – reducing grant funding will have ongoing impacts that will be felt by the community for many years. Many of the recipients of regional grant funding are those who stepped up during the flood and cyclone response and are keeping our communities together, protecting our environment and ensuring the vibrancy of our city’s arts and culture.

### Proposal C: Auckland Council – A 5 per cent reduction in Local Board Funding to save a further \$16 million.

We oppose Proposal C and no reduction in local board funding should occur.

Many local boards across Tāmaki Makaurau have small budgets and portfolios under Asset Based Services ('ABS') compared to their Locally Driven Initiatives ('LDI') budget. For some boards with smaller asset bases and ABS budgets, they will likely end up having to make reductions between 45% - 60% (if not more) from their LDI budget. This puts those boards in the unacceptably difficult position to make serious structurally devastating reductions in basic services that boards provide particularly for those parts of Tāmaki Makaurau which are critically reliant on local board funding.

This will disproportionately and negatively impact the board's ability to respond to the needs of their local communities, something they are mandated to do. There is no equity policy across the local board decision-making meaning that some boards will have their hands tied as to where they can make those savings which will result in less investment available for the communities who need it the most. This proposal will hurt the people and the groups that rely on council services to come together in ways that promote community connectedness and resilience.

Local boards play a key role in promoting the four well-beings of their communities. However, the proposed reduction of funding is a standardised formula across local boards that is not equitable with the levers they can pull to find those savings. Having fewer facilities and contractual obligations will mean the community is likely to be impacted more particularly in areas of most need as they are the groups that are less likely to vote or engage with the budget.

We should prioritise the services and funding that goes towards serving the most vulnerable communities including local connection and resilience work. Community organisations help provide the social infrastructure that supports our most vulnerable, and our communities in crisis. If we were to cut the funding in the local communities, there would be the risk of losing that support for our communities when it is needed to help to achieve the four well-beings.

## Library services

Reductions in LDI funding will have significant impacts on the functioning and access to libraries such as the reduction in library opening hours.

Critically for the PSA, this has a serious impact on our library members who face a real reduction in pay and working conditions resulting from reductions in hours. Many library staff either routinely work weekends/after hours and others who may work during the work often rely on being able to pick up hours on the weekend to supplement their income.

Given that most librarian roles occupy the bottom quartile of the council's remuneration system (i.e. Band D and below), coupled with the current cost of living, many members are expected to face major personal financial impacts should any loss of hours occur.

PSA also undertook qualitative analysis across libraries in 2022 where we found large numbers of library staff have unsustainable levels of workload with significant evidence pointing to a culture of overwork. Many libraries' staff are often forced to take their work home (such as projects or events staff are leading) because paid hours are currently not available. PSA and leads from Connected Communities agreed back in 2022 following this analysis to address this however this work will become effectively dead-in-the-water should the proposals go ahead.

Additionally, with the prospect of the libraries being closed on certain days, likely the weekend, this poses real access issues to members of the public who are reliant on weekend access for a multitude of reasons.

Finally, it is expected that with any closures or reductions in Citizen Advice Bureau services that much of this work will end up falling onto our librarians leading to 'duties-creep' and increased workload without any corresponding increase in remuneration. Our libraries are safe centralised informational spaces open to everyone from the community but there is a

distinction between the professional services librarians provide compared to what Citizens Advice Bureau provides. However, without specialist support on-site or nearby to support the wider ranges of queries from the public, our library staff who are not trained or equipped to support the public this way will end up provide this function because there would not be any clear way to demarcate between core library functions and wider community support services.

### Proposal D: Auckland Council – Withdraw from the direct provision of Early Childcare Education (ECE) services.

The PSA opposes this proposal.

While we do have some members under the Kauri Kids collective, the PSA typically does not organise in the ECE sector. Nevertheless, the PSA is concerned about likely restructuring and further erosion of employment conditions of our fellow kaimahi in this sector resulting from the defunding of this council-delivered service.

While it is unclear what will occur should the council withdraw from this service, should any existing services be sold/transferred to private providers, the PSA would expect that any staff under any collective agreements be both guaranteed employment and transfer on the same or better employment terms and conditions.

Importantly for the PSA, while the number of enrolled children may be small, childcare is an inherent public good. Although it may not be profitable for the council, providing childcare at an affordable rate is of benefit to people across the community, especially for women and communities of colour who are more reliant on affordable and accessible childcare. Funding accessible services to the community, supported by the financial resources the community has pooled through their rates, is precisely the point of local government.

The council needs to look beyond profit and consider whether the public good is worth the public investment under the four well-beings under the Local Government Act 2002.

### Auckland Transport – Reduced funding for public transport service provision

The PSA opposes the cost reduction and under-investment proposed for Auckland Transport.

The Budget proposes maintaining public transport at its current levels. But the current levels are already significantly reduced, so this is effectively saying that the council will not fund public transport to return to normal, pre-pandemic levels. Coupled with the current significant disruptions occurring at the moment across Tāmaki Makaurau – without further investment and expansion of services risks permanent undermining of the public modal shift from private vehicles required by Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan. In other words, there will be a 'point of no return' where without further investment into public transport usage is unlikely to increase and may even go backwards.

We are in the midst of a climate crisis that demands urgent action. Auckland's Climate Plan sets out the critical role public transport and hence Auckland Transport must play in reducing Aucklanders' private vehicle usage and reducing emissions. Rapidly improving and increasing access to public transport networks is one of the most important things a city can do to reduce its climate impact. We do not have the luxury of waiting several more years for public transport provision to return to 2019 levels, let alone improve.

We strongly encourage the lifting wages and working conditions for drivers including improvements in health & safety to incentivise recruitment and retention as the key mechanism in preventing any cancelled or reduced bus trips caused by driver shortages. Additionally, we are not necessarily opposed to the prospect raising of public transport fares so long as any revenue generated is ringfenced for driver recruitment/retention strategies as well as improving the frequency and scheduling of current services. However,

any fare increases should be coupled with a long-term strategy supporting low-income residents in accessing public transport where cost is a barrier.

Additionally, as part of both a modal shift incentive into public transport and revenue generation, we also recommend that Auckland Transport:

- immediate implements paid parking in many of the areas identified in Auckland's draft Parking Strategy which have yet to be introduced.
- increase in fees for parking permits and further roll-out of Residential Parking Permit zones across more areas in central Auckland Isthmus.
- More red-light cameras be installed across the city, particularly at intersections with high traffic volumes and high accident incidents.

Where any charges or projects require central government approval, we strongly endorse the council to approach the central government to advocate for the above.

### Tātaki Auckland Unlimited – Reduction in operating funding for regional facilities and economic development activities

We oppose this proposal.

The supporting information for this proposal notes that there would be a consequential negative effect on regional GDP, businesses, and jobs. It is irresponsible for the council to step back from this type of investment for fiscal reasons without recognising that the investment from the council helps to generate wealth that flows through the city in a variety of ways.

Cuts to spending to attract economic development in Tāmaki Makaurau would reduce future revenue, which will only make it more difficult for Auckland for the city to bring in sustainable levels of funding risking much larger rates rises in the future.

## **Question 2 - Amending Auckland International Airport Limited (AIAL) Shareholding Policy**

We **oppose** the proposal to sell the council's shares in AIAL.

The PSA **strongly supports** retaining public ownership and control of valuable strategic assets. We oppose the sale of assets that are large-scale, strategically important to the economic, environmental, cultural, and social well-being of the community, and the sale of which will disadvantage future generations. We believe that these are the tests that should be applied by the Council in making any decision to sell such assets.

However, we recognise that local government owns a wide range of assets that are not strategically important. It can make sense to sell small-scale assets (e.g, a building or piece of land no longer needed), especially where this would be of benefit to the community in a way that is equitably distributed (e.g. where disposing of council-owned land or unnecessary building would facilitate the provision of affordable and resilient housing). An obvious example that PSA supports is the sale of council-owned golf courses.

## **Question 3 - What is your preference on our proposal to manage rates and debt?**

The PSA submits **Other – Set higher general rates increase and/or make greater use of debt.**

None of the options available is appealing, whether cutting services, raising rates, increasing debt, selling off assets, or introducing other charges. Nevertheless, our position is that none of the proposed reductions outlined in the Budget should proceed and as such, we would expect increasing rates and debt to be the primary mechanism to address the council's current budget deficit.

### General rates

The cost-cutting set out in this budget has been presented as an inevitable decision made at a purely financial level. But it must be acknowledged that this appears more or less driven by a political overreliance on austerity ideology focusing only on keeping rates low and stripping services to the community.

We get so many valuable things with our rates, and these are the types of things that make a city a place where people want to live. As a community, we need to be willing to recognise the value that local government services provide and resource them.

The proposed rates increase of 4.66% (combined with reductions in targeted rates) equates to around \$3 per week for the average household. The annual budget supporting information indicates that a 13.5% general rates increase would be required to meet the full amount of operating budget pressure and that this would require an average of an additional \$5.30 per household per week on top of what is proposed.

That has a real impact, especially for people struggling to keep up with their living expenses in a cost-of-living crisis. But the scale of what we can achieve collectively through Aucklanders pooling their money in rates for the common good far outweighs what households could achieve individually.



To put it in perspective:

- The average increase in rates per household to fully fund all of the services that are being cut (\$433 per year) would amount to approximately 0.4% of the average NZ household's income (noting that because rates are based on property values, rates are likely to be higher for those most able to afford it, and lower for those least able)
- The proposed rates increase for Tāmaki Makaurau is significantly lower than the proposed rates increase for Wellington, on rates that are on average already lower than those in Wellington.
- The council is proposing rating increases that are lower than the level of inflation, which means that in real terms the amount of funding not only is not increasing enough, or standing still but is, in fact, going backwards.

### Targeted rates

It is misleading for the council to say that if the environment and water quality targeted rates are cut the delivery of those services will continue as normal. If we cut this funding, we will have less money to pay for important improvements to our environment in future years.

The natural environment targeted ('NETR') and water quality targeted ('WQTR') rates were extremely hard to win, and if those targeted rates are lost now then it will be likely difficult for the charges reintroduced at the same levels, if at all again in the future.

The NETR funds a significant amount of community climate action, including programmes to decrease Tāmaki Makaurau's greenhouse gas emissions, and to support the resilience of our communities to climate change. This action is urgent and will only become more costly the longer it is delayed.

The WQTR includes programmes such as stream naturalisation which make our city more resilient to storms and flooding inundation.

The funding for community groups via the NETR enables many thousands of hours of volunteer time – many of these groups will fold if this funding disappears and the council will need to pick up the costs of things like pest control to meet our statutory obligations – ***it will cost us more than we will save.***

We cannot just pause community groups and initiatives – if we take away funding for one year these initiatives will take many years to get back up and running (if they ever do) and time is of the essence when it comes to preventing biodiversity collapse and helping our communities take climate action.

It is nonsensical to consider cutting the WQTR when we have just seen with the Auckland storm and flood events the cost of not investing in our infrastructure. Many WQTR programmes in addition to improving water quality provide increased capacity for stormwater and increased climate resilience for example through stream naturalisation and planting.

## Debt

Auckland Council has relatively low levels of debt (when compared to the debt-to-revenue ceiling) and has a strong credit rating.

The council's debt limit of \$140 million is self-imposed, rather than dictated by external requirements. But in any case, the council could undertake up to 86% more borrowing than currently proposed while remaining within its limit. Given that the limit itself is arbitrary, it is difficult to understand why the council would then limit itself to only use just over half of its available capacity.

We believe in the current confluence of crises – the cost-of-living crisis making rates increases less affordable for Aucklanders, the effects of the pandemic reducing council income, and the scale of investment needed to make Tāmaki Makaurau climate-resilient in the future – there may be justification in increased borrowing.

#### **Question 4 - What is your preference on our proposal to manage the impact of future storms?**

The PSA **Supports** the proposal.

The PSA is in principle supportive of any proposal that improves the resilience of assets and infrastructure, which reduces the risk of severe weather and climate-related harms to our people and community.

We propose that this proposed increase in the budget be made permanent and be adjusted both for inflation as well as being scalable for any predicted climate change-driven increases in the frequency and intensity of storms and sea level rise.

The council is proposing to introduce an additional \$20 million to the operating budget for storm response, something the PSA wants to ensure is ringfenced for actual storm response on the day(s) of the event, recovery activities, and proactive stormwater maintenance.

However, it is difficult to apprehend the actual requirements of the storm response and recovery, clean up, and future effort to make communities safe, as these will be largely dependent on the storm event itself and the resulting damage.

The \$20 million each year expected to be raised by this, will require investigations (some of which are now underway) to ascertain the appropriate allocation of this expenditure but

PSA believes that in the short term, work should be prioritised based on the areas of highest risk. This could include increases to our drain clearance work as well as increased provision for emergency management, waste disposal, building inspections and support for areas at the highest risk of flooding inundation. This may require the rates increase for 2023/2024 to be 1 per cent higher than proposed.

We do endorse increasing the frequency and intensity of asset management/maintenance of Council stormwater systems, as these can reduce the likelihood of flooding.

We want to ensure that a significant portion of the funding raised is allocated to working communities most vulnerable to future storms and adverse weather events. This is in line with PSA's commitment to just transition (as defined by the Future of Work Tripartite Forum<sup>2</sup>) which amongst other things requires equitable sharing of the costs across society insofar that recovery or transition costs do not disproportionately fall on the shoulders of those least able to afford it as well as a commitment to deliver for more marginalised groups so that they can play a leading role in identifying and planning for climate change challenges.

The PSA is already actively working in partnership with the council to identify and plan for the mitigation and adaptation required for our workforce here at the council and we would like to see some of the proposed \$20 million be allocated to this work.

### **Question 5 - Local board priorities**

As PSA is a regional stakeholder, we are unable to comment on specific priorities for individual local boards, however, please refer to our feedback about the overall proposed 5% reduction under [Question 1 – Proposal C](#).

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<sup>2</sup> Future of Work Tripartite Forum “Definition of a Just Transition for the Future of Work Tripartite Forum” (28 March 2022) Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment <[www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz)>

## Question 6 - Changes to other rates and fees and charges

The PSA **Supports** all proposed increases to all five listed targeted rates and other charges.

In line with our earlier feedback made in the Introduction – our view is that further increases in revenue such as these and other targeted rates/charges are the preferred lever to address any budgetary shortfall as opposed to the proposed expenditure reductions.

## Question 7 - Is there anything else you would like to give feedback on?

### Living Wage accreditation

We acknowledge and thank Council for the work done thus far to pay the living wage but seek a commitment that the council continues to pay the Living Wage and extend it to all CCOs, sub-contractors and private contracting firms – making it a requirement of the contract, and that it be pegged – as a minimum – to the living wage set by Living Wage Aotearoa. We would also like to see that Council becomes a fully accredited Living Wage employer which it currently is not.

We note that the current Mayor during the local elections in 2022 made a public commitment to become an accredited Living Wage employer and signed the relevant pledge. We would like to remind the Mayor of this commitment and encourage the Governing Body to officially accredit council this year.

### Pay equity

Equal pay is a human right and has been a longstanding concern of the PSA. All workers should be paid a fair and decent wage regardless of gender and ethnicity.

Given the council's legal and workforce obligations to address and resolve gender & ethnic pay inequities across the organisation, the PSA strongly urges Council to both identify and set aside/ringfence funding within the Budget so that:

- Sufficient funding is available to meet the entire settlement quantum following the resolution of PSA's equal pay claim for library workers; and
- Sufficient funding is available to address further identified pay discrimination throughout the organisation as per the council's commitment under our collective agreement.

We also advocate for greater pay transparency within the organisation and ask for the Governing Body to endorse the Public Service Commission's "Kia Toipoto — Public Service Pay Gaps Action Plan 2021–24" specifically the "Guidance on removing bias from remuneration and human resources policies and practices" and "Guidance on flexible work and representation".<sup>3</sup>

### Lowering the voting age to 16-year-olds – local government elections

The PSA membership here at the council urges the Governing Body to endorse the campaign to lower the voting age to 16 years old following the Supreme Court decision in *Make It 16 Incorporated v Attorney-General* which held that the Electoral Act 1993 and Local Electoral Act 2001 unjustifiably limited the right against discrimination based on age.

While there appear to be difficulties with having this implemented nationwide, lowering the voting age appears more feasible in the local government space. Given the reported demographics of respondents in this submission process being unreflective of the diversity of our city and given that this also appears the case in the turnout for local elections, extending voting enfranchisement to 16 and 17 years olds for local body elections is an attractive mechanism to uplift general turnout, improve engagement with

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<sup>3</sup> Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission "Kia Toipoto — Public Service Pay Gaps Action Plan 2021–24" Public Service Commission <[www.publicservice.govt.nz](http://www.publicservice.govt.nz)>

underrepresented demographics and build a culture of local body engagement in the formative learning years.

## Workload

Safe workloads are a critical issue for the health and well-being of workers, and the sustainable functioning of council services. Council resourcing needs to be sufficient to ensure enough staff to meet the volume of work required without resorting to unsafe workloads.

## Feedback about the Annual Budget process

The PSA would also like to see changes to the length of time allocated for the public consultation period as part of this Annual Budget process.

Currently, the submission period is only one month long which in our view is highly insufficient and should be extended to at least two months (or more) at least to allow enough time for consultees to properly review the often-complex topics and detailed supporting documents; and then be able to prepare a correspondingly detailed submission.

To this, we suggest Council adopt the consultation timelines and processes as used by the New Zealand Parliament Select Committees whereby:

- The period for written submission is usually around 40-42 days:
- That the oral submission opportunity occurs *after* this deadline for written submissions

The Auckland Council Public Service Association Pledge<sup>4</sup> sets out clearly the council's commitment to work in an active and high-engagement partnership model with the PSA. We believe this model is wider than just the operational side of the organisation and

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<sup>4</sup> The Auckland Council Public Service Association Pledge (March 2018)

incorporates the elected officials of the council and key areas of the Governing Body work such as the Mayoral Proposal and Annual Budget process. Going forward, we consider it paramount in line with the Pledge that the PSA is engaged with a lot earlier, separately, and meaningfully in the Budget development process.

## **Thank you for considering our submission.**

**We wish to acknowledge the hard work and excellent contributions of our Auckland Council PSA Delegates and Members in preparing this submission.**

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