

Regulatory Impact Statement: Setting an advance voting period

Decision sought	Cabinet decisions on advance voting, for inclusion in the Electoral Matters Bill
Agency responsible	Ministry of Justice
Proposing Ministers	Minister of Justice
Date finalised	26 March 2025

This Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) relates to an amendment to the Electoral Act 1993 to set an advance voting period of 12 days for general elections and by-elections, which is proposed to be included in the Electoral Matters Bill.

The Electoral Matters Bill will include a range of policy proposals. The Cabinet paper on the proposal in this RIS also includes proposals on closing enrolment 13 days before election day, introducing automatic enrolment updates, removing requirements to conduct enrolment processes by post, and other administrative efficiencies. These proposals are not in scope of this RIS. A separate RIS has been prepared on closing enrolment 13 days before election day and introducing automatic enrolment updates.¹

Summary: Problem definition and options

What is the policy problem?

The length of the advance voting period for general elections and by-elections is currently an operational decision for the Electoral Commission (the Commission). The Electoral Act 1993 and Electoral Regulations 1996 require some provision to be made for voting in advance of election day, but do not require advance voting to be provided for a specific length of time.

This makes the length of advance voting uncertain for future elections, particularly in a fiscally constrained environment and given the Commission is currently experiencing material cost pressures. This is significant because a shorter advance voting period would likely make voting more challenging and less accessible. Codifying the advance voting period will provide greater certainty for voters, candidates and parties, and other electoral participants, and protect the provision of advance voting in future elections.

This problem relates to a lack of regulation to set requirements for advance voting; therefore, regulatory intervention is required to mitigate the risk we have identified.

¹ <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/regulatory-stewardship/regulatory-impact-assessments/>

What is the policy objective?

The proposal will need to:

- Be clear and consistent – electoral laws, and their effects, are clear to all.
- Be practicable and enduring – electoral law reflects current practical realities and can accommodate future changes/developments.
- Support the legitimacy of democracy – voter turnout, and other forms of participation from candidates and political parties, is improved.

What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation?

There are two sets of decisions to codify advance voting in legislation: what model of advance voting will be used and how long the advance voting period should be.

Model of advance voting

- Status quo: the length of the advance voting period continues to be an operational decision taken by the Commission.
- Minimum advance voting period: the Electoral Act is amended to set a minimum length for advance voting.
- Maximum advance voting period: the Electoral Act is amended to set a maximum length for advance voting.
- Set number of days for advance voting: the Electoral Act is amended to set the number of days for advance voting (*preferred option*).

Length of advance voting

- Status quo: the Commission continues to decide how long to provide advance voting. In previous elections this has been between 12-17 days.
- 12 days: advance voting takes place for 12 days prior to polling day (*preferred option*).
- 7 days: advance voting takes place for 7 days prior to polling day.

What consultation has been undertaken?

Recent electoral reviews, including the Independent Electoral Review (IER)² and the Justice Committee Inquiry into the 2023 General Election, received public submissions on a range of issues including advance voting. The IER specifically consulted on the option to set a 12-day minimum for the advance voting period, and the majority of respondents supported the proposal, although support was not universal.

The Ministry has consulted the Commission, which will be responsible for implementing this proposal. The Commission supports the proposal.

Is the preferred option in the Cabinet paper the same as preferred option in the RIS?

Yes

Summary: Minister's preferred option in the Cabinet paper

Costs (Core information)

The proposed change essentially codifies the current practice therefore it is unlikely that the cost to deliver a 12-day advance voting period will be materially different. Therefore, there

² <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/Independent-Electoral-Review-Final-Report-November-2023.pdf>, November 2023.

will be no monetised costs. However, there is potential that other election service delivery levels will need to be scaled to provide a 12-day advance voting period.

Benefits (Core information)

There are no monetised benefits.

The proposal will codify requirements for advance voting, which will support an accessible election for voters. It will also provide certainty for political parties as they plan their campaigns, and for the Commission as it delivers elections.

Balance of benefits and costs (Core information)

Does the RIS indicate that the benefits of the Minister's preferred option are likely to outweigh the costs?

We consider that the benefits outweigh the potential costs, given the preferred option largely codifies the current operational practice. There is a trade-off between flexibility for the Commission as it delivers elections, and certainty that benefits voters and political parties, both with their own costs and benefits. There is risk that election delivery services will be scaled down to meet funding constraints, however, this exists under the status quo.

Implementation

How will the proposal be implemented, who will implement it, and what are the risks?

The proposal will be progressed through the Electoral Matters Bill and will come into effect for the 2026 General Election.

The Commission will be responsible for implementing the proposal. The Commission is experiencing material cost pressures, which will significantly affect service delivery levels for the 2026 General Election. Managing these cost pressures will support the implementation of this proposal. The Commission will require adequate ongoing funding to ensure the requirements for advance voting are met in future elections.

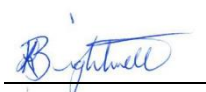
Limitations and Constraints on Analysis

We have not undertaken direct consultation on the proposal, but we have drawn on consultation related to advance voting that was undertaken as part of other electoral reviews.

The Commission is not able to provide a demographic breakdown of advance votes, so we could not analyse the population impacts between each option.

I have read the Regulatory Impact Statement and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the preferred option.

Responsible Manager(s) signature:
Kathy Brightwell
General Manager, Civil and Constitutional
26 March 2025



Quality Assurance Statement	
Reviewing Agency: Ministry of Justice	QA rating: Meets
Panel Comment: The Ministry of Justice’s RIA QA Panel has reviewed the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) prepared by the Ministry of Justice and associated supporting material on 24 March 2025. The Panel consider that the information and analysis summarised in the RIS meets the Quality Assurance criteria. The RIS provides a clear and succinct summary of the issues and options for advance voting in our electoral law. The cost benefit analysis of the options of the two key decisions needed to address the policy problem is persuasive. The Panel concluded reliance in the RIS on recent public engagement on the topic in other forums did not reduce the robustness of the advice to support Ministers’ decision making. The Panel noted the explanation of how funding for the Electoral Commission related to the proposed package, and how any funding constraints may play out in future elections regarding the changes.	

Section 1: Diagnosing the policy problem

What is the context behind the policy problem and how is the status quo expected to develop?

1. Electoral laws are critical to upholding and enabling New Zealand’s representative democracy. Eligible electors may participate in triennial general elections by casting their vote for people who will make up Parliament – it is this participation which is key to the integrity and legitimacy of democracy in New Zealand. The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 affirms the right of citizens to vote in periodic elections. Developments to electoral laws, such as advance voting, can support participation and enhance the overall integrity of the system.
2. The Electoral Regulations 1996 provide the legislative basis for advance voting, but it is minimal. From the close of nominations and after the Electoral Commission (the Commission) has produced party lists, voters may be issued with advance ordinary ballots.³ At a minimum, the Commission must have one office available in each electorate for advance voters, and the Returning Officer decides the days and times this office will be open. As such, the provision of advance voting in elections is largely an operational decision made by the Commission. It determines the number of days advance voting runs for, and the number and hours of polling places in each electorate.
3. Over the five most recent general elections, advance voting has been open for between 12-17 days before polling day, and has become an increasingly popular way to vote, as shown in Table One below. The Commission has indicated that if advance voting was not codified and it received adequate funding, then it would continue to provide 12 days of advance voting.

Table One: advance voter turnout

³ Regulations 19 and 24, Electoral Regulations 1996.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Length of advance voting</i>	<i>Proportion of overall turnout</i>	<i>Number of advance voting places</i>
2011	17 days	15%	254
2014	17 days	29%	295
2017	12 days	47%	485
2020	14 days	67% ⁴	1522
2023	12 days	61%	829

4. Under the status quo, there is a risk that the Commission could choose to significantly reduce or remove advance voting in order to manage its fiscal constraints. The Commission is currently experiencing cost pressures which present a significant risk to the delivery of the next election. It has advised that funding constraints could result in a very short advance voting period, which would put pressure on service delivery to meet voter demand, such as long wait times at polling places.
5. The Commission has a high degree of flexibility to deliver elections. Such flexibility is useful because the Commission has discretion to make the election more cost effective, but it also means that large parts of election delivery and services can be scaled down to meet fiscal demands. Scaled down services make elections very difficult for the Commission to deliver and for voters to participate because there are fewer polling places and voting hours to manage voter volumes at polling places.

What is the policy problem or opportunity?

6. The minimal requirements for advance voting in the Electoral Act 1993 and Electoral Regulations 1996 means that there is a risk that it could be significantly reduced in order to manage operational challenges, for example, funding constraints.
7. There is an opportunity to amend the law to standardise the requirements for advance voting in general elections and by-elections. This will require the Commission to deliver an appropriate advance voting period.
8. There are three actors which have a particular interest in this proposal: voters, political parties, and the Commission, because it affects how they participate in or deliver elections.
 - a. **Voters:** Advance voting provides flexibility and makes it more accessible for voters to participate in elections. Voters who work irregular hours, have caregiving responsibilities, or otherwise have trouble travelling to a polling place on election day benefit from the availability of advance voting.
 - b. **Political parties:** The timing for advance voting will affect how parties plan their campaigns and major policy announcements based on when people are likely to vote.
 - c. **Electoral Commission:** Advance voting helps to distribute voter numbers over a greater number of days to manage demand at polling places. It also assists with managing temporary disruptions to voting, for example, an extreme weather event which may temporarily stop voting at some polling places. Advance voting distributes this risk. The length and model of advance voting will affect how the

⁴ The 2020 General Election was subject to COVID-19 restrictions, and voters were encouraged to vote early and locally to help manage the spread of COVID-19.

Commission plans to navigate and distribute risk and demand. The Commission has advised that it supports codifying the advance voting period, since this would provide it with clearer expectations for election delivery.

9. The Ministry of Justice (the Ministry) has been able consult directly with the Commission, which supports codifying advance voting in legislation, but notes that it will need to continue to be adequately funded to ensure it can provide voting services for that period.
10. However, there have been recent opportunities for the public to express their views about advance voting. Specifically, via the public consultation on the Independent Electoral Review (IER) in 2022-2023 and the Justice Committee Inquiry into the 2023 General Election (the Justice Committee Inquiry) in 2024. In general, there was support for codifying the advance voting period.

What objectives are sought in relation to the policy problem?

11. The Ministry has identified three objectives:
 - a. Clear and consistent – electoral laws, and their effects, are clear to all.
 - b. Practicable and enduring – electoral law reflects current practical realities and can accommodate future changes/developments.
 - c. Support the legitimacy of democracy – voter turnout, and other forms of participation from candidates and political parties, is improved.
12. The practicable and enduring objective, as it relates to the cost effectiveness of the proposal, has some trade-off with electoral participation, although they are not entirely contradictory. There is a point of intersection, where it is more cost effective to provide some advance voting to manage the cost of short-term venue rentals and manage the lines at polling places, which supports voter participation. There is also a small trade-off between the ‘clear and consistent’ and ‘practicable and enduring’ objectives, because increasing certainty may reduce the ability to respond to future needs if there is less flexibility to change the advance voting settings.

What consultation has been undertaken?

13. This proposal has previously been consulted publicly through other channels – specifically, the Justice Committee inquiries into previous elections, and the IER.
14. The Justice Committee inquiries into the 2014 and 2023 General Elections considered codifying the advance voting period in legislation. The 2014 election inquiry recommended a 12-day advance voting period, whereas the 2023 election inquiry did not specify a length. The majority of submitters who commented on advance voting in the inquiries expressed support for the continuation of advance voting but did not comment on a set 12-day period. We can infer that this support for advance voting is largely based on the status quo, which has been between 12-17 days over the last five elections.
15. The IER specifically consulted on the option to set a 12-day minimum for the advance voting period. Of the 4593 respondents to an online survey that answered the question on advance voting, 53.73% supported the proposal to require advance voting for at least 12 days, and 34.96% of respondents did not support the proposal. In written submissions that discussed advance voting, most supported the proposal. A few written submissions suggested alternative lengths for advance voting, and a small number thought that there should be no advance voting.

Section 2: Assessing options to address the policy problem

What criteria will be used to compare options to the status quo?

16. There are two sets of decisions required to codify advance voting, with their own criteria to assess the various options that apply. These are outlined below, along with an explanation for each criterion.
17. The problem we have identified – the lack of certainty within the legislative provisions that set out the advance voting period – is addressed by Decision A, which looks at the model for advance voting. The outcome of Decision A necessarily raises the question in Decision B – how long the advance voting period should be. There is a close interconnection between the decisions, and the outcome of Decision A informs the options we have considered for Decision B.
18. The criterion for each decision is set out below with the options considered for Decisions A and B.

What scope will options be considered within?

19. In our view, regulatory options are the only alternative to the status quo that we can consider. The problem we have identified is there are minimal legislative provisions which protect advance voting, and there is a risk that advance voting could be reduced or removed in order to manage operational challenges, for example, funding constraints. We have identified options which relate to how to codify the advance voting period, which are all regulatory in nature.
20. This RIS is focused on options to codify the model and length of advance voting, and will not cover other matters related to advance voting, for instance, advertising rules. Currently, there are different advertising rules during the advance voting period and on election day. The advance voting rules only limit campaign material or advertising near advance polling places, whereas on election day there is a complete prohibition on campaign advertising. While this matter is out of scope of the Electoral Matters Bill, it may be considered at a future point.

Decision A: What options are being considered for the model of advance voting?

Criteria used to compare the options to the status quo

21. These options look at how the advance voting period is prescribed in law. The criteria for these options are:
 - a. **Certainty:** whether the model provides certainty for voters, political parties, and the Commission, and whether the model is simple to understand.
 - b. **Flexibility:** whether there is appropriate operational flexibility for the Commission to deliver election services efficiently and effectively.
22. There is a trade-off between these criteria because the more certainty there is in the law about the length of the advance voting period, the less flexibility there will be for the Commission to change the length in response to changing circumstances.

Option A1 – Status Quo

23. Under the current settings, the advance voting period is set by the Commission. For instance, in the last three elections, advance voting has run for 12-14 days continuously before polling day. In 2011 and 2014, advance voting started 17 days before polling day, but advance voting was not available on Sundays. See Table One above.

Option A2 – minimum advance voting period

24. Amend the Electoral Act to require advance voting to run for a minimum amount of time. Under this option, the Commission could have some discretion to extend the advance voting period. This option provides high certainty for the minimum provision of advance voting but does not provide flexibility to shorten the advance voting period for any reason.

Option A3 – maximum advance voting period

25. Amend the Electoral Act to specify that the advance voting period cannot run for more than a certain number of days. The Commission could set the advance voting period for fewer days than the maximum set in the legislation. This provides high certainty for political parties as they plan their campaigns but does not give certainty about the minimum provision of advance voting.

Option A4 – set number of days for the advance voting period, with limited exceptions

26. Amend the Election Act to specify that the advance voting period can run for a set number of days, with limited exceptions in the Act for emergencies where the advance voting period needs to be altered. For example, during the 2020 General Election the Commission set a longer advance voting period to deliver the election safely in line with public health guidance. The Commission would not have discretion to set an alternative advance voting period unless an exception applies. Provides a lot of certainty for political parties and voters, but there is more limited flexibility for the Commission to alter the length of advanced voting.

Options considered but ruled out

27. We also considered two further advance voting models: a gap between the end of advance voting and polling day, and a range of days advance voting can be set at.
28. The gap model is used in Canada and Finland. We ruled out this option because it would be a substantial departure from current practice, and we considered it to be overly complicated. It also would not meet the overall objective of a cost-effective solution since polling places would be unused during the no-voting gap.
29. The range model is effectively a combination of a minimum and a maximum advance voting period. Therefore, it was assessed in our consideration of Options A2 and A3 and was not considered as a separate option.

Decision A: How do the options compare to the status quo/counterfactual?

Options for the model of the advance voting period

	Option A1 – status quo	Option A2 – minimum	Option A3 – maximum	Option A4 – set
Certainty	0	+ Easy for voters and political parties to understand. Provides certainty about the minimum level of advance voting, which is useful for political parties when planning their campaigns and provides a guarantee of flexibility for voters. Sets clear expectations for the Commission.	- Does not protect against risk that advance voting period could be significantly reduced to meet funding constraints, despite the negative effect on voters and accessibility. Does not address the problem identified. Limits the risk of voters casting their vote before a big campaign announcement which could have changed their vote. Useful for campaign planning.	++ Easy for voters and political parties to understand and plan around. Provides the most certainty for voters and political parties.
Flexibility	0	0 The Commission has some flexibility to extend the length of the advance voting period, where necessary. No flexibility for the Commission to set a shorter period if needed (for example, if an emergency impacts advance voting for a short time). Like the status quo, adequate funding is a relevant consideration here.	0 Does not account for circumstances where it makes sense operationally for advance voting to be longer, for example, to account for increasing voter volumes – the Act would need to be amended to enable a longer advance voting period.	0 There is no flexibility for the Commission, unless an exception applies (for example, an emergency or disruption). Like the status quo, adequate funding is a relevant consideration here.
Overall assessment	0	+	-	++

Key: ++ much better than the status quo; + better than the status quo; 0 about the same as the status quo; - worse than the status quo; -- much worse than the status quo.

Decision A: What option is likely to best address the problem, meet the policy objectives, and deliver the highest net benefits?

30. We consider that Option A2 (minimum advance voting period) and Option A4 (set advance voting period) both address the problem and risks we have identified with the status quo.
31. On balance, we prefer Option A4, as it provides the most certainty for voters and political parties, since the advance voting period will be a guaranteed length unless an exception applies. This will support political parties as they plan their campaigns and set clear requirements for the Commission in its election delivery.
32. We think that the reduced flexibility for the Commission can be appropriately managed through exceptions. There will need to be some flexibility to change the length of the advance voting period in some emergency situations. The legislation will set out the circumstances where the length of advance voting can be varied (either longer or shorter). These will be worked through as the Bill is drafted and will likely draw on the grounds in the existing emergency provisions.
33. Our preference for a set advance voting period has informed the options we considered for Decision B.

Decision B: What options are being considered for the length of the advance voting period?

Criteria used to compare the options to the status quo

34. These options look at how long advance voting should be available for. The criteria for assessing these options are:
 - a. **Supports voter participation:** considers whether and to what extent the length provides flexibility to voters and makes voting more accessible. The degree to which voter expectations (based on voting turnout numbers in previous elections) are accommodated, and how demand at polling places is met (for example, wait times to vote).
 - b. **Campaigning:** considers how the length will affect campaigns. For example, timing of key policy announcements, and when advertising is scheduled.
 - c. **Cost effective:** considers the voter turnout trends in previous elections, and whether the length is an efficient use of funds, and whether there are cost efficiencies that are captured by the length.
35. Decision B does not consider the trade-offs between certainty and flexibility, as these have only been considered in the analysis of Decision A. This decision considers options for the length, in light of the preference for a set advance voting period (Option A4).

Option B1 – Status Quo

36. The length of the advance voting period is currently set by the Commission. Over previous elections, it has been between 12-17 days before polling day. Figure One below sets out the daily advance votes cast in previous elections, illustrating when there has previously been the most demand for advance voting.

Figure One: Daily advance votes, 2017-2023

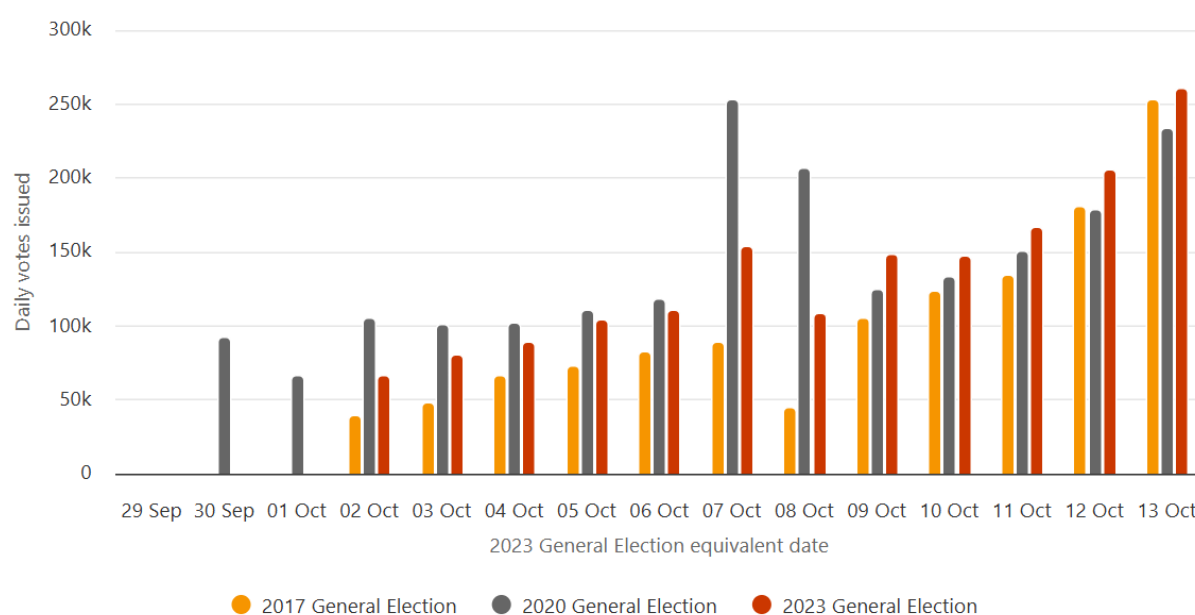


Figure from *Report of the Electoral Commission on the 2023 General Election*, May 2024.

Option B2 – 12 days

37. Amend the Electoral Act to set the advance voting period to 12 days before polling day (i.e. the Monday of the week before polling day). This would ensure one full weekend of advance voting, as well as the Saturday of election day itself. This is consistent with the offering in Australia, which allows up to 12 days of advance (or pre-poll) voting.

Option B3 – 7 days

38. Amend the Electoral Act to set the advance voting period to 7 days before polling day (i.e. the Saturday before polling day). For comparison, Finland also allows for 7 days of advance voting, but uses a gap model (discussed in paragraph 28 above).

Options considered but ruled out

39. A range of options could be considered for the length of advance voting. We also considered a longer advance voting period of 17 days, since this was the advance voting period in the 2011 and 2014 elections. We ruled out this option on the basis that it would make it more difficult for political parties to plan their campaigns, and it is more than is necessary to meet voter demand – as evidenced by the Commission shortening the advance voting period in recent elections.

Decision B: How do the options compare to the status quo/counterfactual?

Options for the length of the advance voting period

	Option B1 – status quo	Option B2 – 12 days	Option B3 – 7 days
Supports voter participation	0	0 Aligns with the period at most recent election. Accessible and provides flexibility to voters. Provides lead-in time for polling workers to scale up capacity to process lines faster.	- Accessible and provides flexibility to voters. May not meet voter expectations initially but may change as voters adjust to this length. Could be difficult to meet voter demand and manage wait times as voter volumes increase in future elections.
Campaigning	0	0 Aligns with the period for most recent election. Political parties have demonstrated that this is a suitable length of time for advance voting.	+ Helps parties manage the timing of key policy announcements, so they are fresh in the minds of voters, but also announced before the polls open.
Cost effective	0	0 The Commission continues to have ability to scale up capacity throughout advance voting period.	0 Focuses on time where there is the most demand. Average of 73% of advance votes cast during 7 days prior to polling day. Limited lead-in time as polling workers scale up capacity to complete processes faster.
Overall assessment	0	0	0
Key: ++ much better than the status quo; + better than the status quo; 0 about the same as the status; - worse than the status quo; -- much worse than the status quo.			

Note: Option B2 codifies standard practice, as 12 days is the standard that the Commission has indicated it prefers and would continue to endeavour to deliver in future elections under the status quo.

Decision B: What option is likely to best address the problem, meet the policy objectives, and deliver the highest net benefits?

40. Our preferred option is Option B2, which sets advance voting at 12 days prior to polling day. Option B2 scores the same as the status quo, because the two options are largely aligned – 12 days for advance voting is consistent with the 2023 and 2017 elections (noting that the 2020 election had exceptional circumstances which impacted the length). Therefore, it is likely to meet voter expectations, and political parties are familiar with planning their campaigns for a 12-day advance voting period. We also know that it is feasible for the Commission to deliver an election in this time and is the Commission’s preferred length for advance voting.
41. Despite being a reasonably long period, we think that, on balance, 12 days is a more cost-effective advance voting period than seven days. Twelve days offers lead-in time for the Commission to build capacity as polling places become busier closer to polling day, and they are more likely to meet voter demand when there is this lead-in time.

Is the Minister’s preferred option in the Cabinet paper the same as the agency’s preferred option in the RIS?

42. The Minister’s combination of preferred options aligns with the Ministry’s preferred options.

What are the marginal costs and benefits of the preferred combination of options in the Cabinet paper?

Affected groups	Comment	Impact	Evidence Certainty
Additional costs of the preferred option compared to taking no action			
Voters	The proposal provides certainty to voters about the length of the advance voting period, however, there is a risk that the service delivery levels that the Commission provides will be scaled down to meet funding constraints. This would come at a cost to the voter experience because lines at polling places may be significantly longer than previous elections and there may be fewer polling places available in each electorate. This risk has existed under the status quo. However, the risk may be increased given the proposal removes some operational flexibility for the Commission, which means there are fewer adjustments the Commission can make to lessen the effect on voters.	High	Medium
Electoral Commission	The cost will remain the same, as compared to the status quo, because the proposal largely codifies the Commission’s current practice, and the Commission is still expected to deliver the election within its budget.	Medium	Medium

	There is a risk to service delivery if the Commission needs to scale down some services in order to provide advance voting for 12 days and stay within its budget. The risk that services will need to be scaled down to meet budget constraints has existed under the status quo. However, the risk may increase given the proposal removes the operational flexibility for the Commission to decide the length of the advance voting period.		
Total monetised costs		N/A	
Non-monetised costs		<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>
Additional benefits of the preferred option compared to taking no action			
Voters	Ensures a minimum provision of advance voting by codifying what has become the standard length for advance voting in elections. We have a high level of certainty that this benefit will occur for voters.	Medium	High
Political parties	Certainty for campaign planning, for example, timing of election policy announcements. We have a high level of certainty that this benefit will occur, because the advance voting period will not change unless an exception applies.	Medium	High
Electoral Commission	Provides certainty to support election planning.	Medium	High
Total monetised benefits		N/A	
Non-monetised benefits		<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>

Section 3: Delivering an option

How will the proposal be implemented?

43. This proposal will be progressed through the Electoral Matters Bill and will take effect for the 2026 General Election.
44. The Commission will be responsible for implementing the advance voting period. The proposal will codify what has largely been standard practice in recent elections, which simplifies implementation for the Commission.
45. Currently, the Commission decides how to deliver advance voting based on a variety of factors, including funding. The Commission is experiencing material cost pressures

which create significant risks to the delivery of future elections. The Commission has submitted a cost pressure budget bid for Budget 2025. If funded, this bid would manage cost pressures for the 2026 General Election and support implementation of this proposal. A set advance voting period would also need to be factored into any future funding allocated to the Commission for election delivery.

46. We have worked with the Commission to develop this proposal, to ensure that we have presented operationally feasible and practical options for consideration. They will retain some of the operational flexibility they have under the status quo, for example, the discretion to set the number and operating hours for polling places, which will be different for every electorate. We consider that the preferred option progressed in the Cabinet paper aligns with the Commission's preferences, and we can work with the Commission to develop appropriate exceptions for the length of the advance voting period.

How will the proposal be monitored, evaluated, and reviewed?

47. The Electoral Commission already collects relevant data each election, for example, the daily numbers of advance votes cast and voter satisfaction. This data will capture the impact of this change and therefore new data will not need to be collected. The Commission will monitor the impact this change has on the data, for example, to see whether voters report lower satisfaction, or any change to wait times at polling places.
48. Aspects of the electoral system are regularly reviewed. The Commission and the Justice Committee both complete a triennial review after each general election. The public and other stakeholders have an opportunity to submit to the Justice Committee review. The Government's response to the Justice Committee's recommendations is tabled in the House. Amendments to the Electoral Act are regularly used to improve and modernise aspects of the administration of the system between elections.