



Mackenzie
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Waitaki
DISTRICT COUNCIL
TE KAUNIHERA Ā ROHE O WAITAKI

Southern Canterbury Councils Joint Submission

To: Environment Canterbury

Topic: Initial Proposal for Representation Arrangements for Environment Canterbury 2025

Date: 23 May 2024

Submitters: Mackenzie District Council, Timaru District Council, Waimate District Council, Waitaki District Council – referred to as the Southern Canterbury Councils

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Submission on the Initial Proposal for Representation Arrangements for Environment Canterbury 2025 Elections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Southern Canterbury Councils agree that:
 - a. Effective representation must be at the core of Environment Canterbury’s (ECan) future governance structure.
 - b. An examination of ECan’s governance structure must have regard to the divergent interests between metropolitan Christchurch and rural Canterbury.
 - c. The current electoral model predicated as it is on equal representation plus or minus 10% presents a number of problematic issues given the distribution of Canterbury’s population and diversity of environmental interests.
 - d. South Canterbury (including part of the Waitaki District) makes up 39.84% of the total area of the Canterbury region, and as such, option one is the only choice as representation should not be predominately a population driven model, but rather focused on a number of factors including land area, population, complexity and the diversity of the region.
2. We therefore submit that our region **maintains two representatives** in the South Canterbury constituency by selecting **Option One**- Retain the status quo (with Ōtautahi/Christchurch City constituency realignment).

SOUTHERN CANTERBURY COUNCILS’ PROPOSAL

3. Environment Canterbury representation model consisting of **14 elected members, with two being located in each of the constituencies** works effectively on a population with a vast, diverse land mass basis.

Population ratios for option one

Constituency	Population	Members	Population member ratios	# Difference from quota	%Difference from quota
Ōpukepuke/North Canterbury	87,000	2	43,500	-4,093	-8.60
Ōpuna/Christchurch West	104,800	2	52,400	4,807	10.10
Ōrea/Christchurch North-East	102,000	2	51,000	3,407	7.16
Ōhoko/Christchurch Central	101,100	2	50,550	2,957	6.21
Ōwhanga/Christchurch South	88,300	2	44,150	-3,443	-7.23
Ōpākihi/Mid-Canterbury	118,100	2	59,050	11,457	24.07
Ōtuhituhi/South Canterbury	65,000	2	32,500	-15,093	-31.71
Totals	666,300*	14	47,593		

KEY REASONS FOR SOUTHERN CANTERBURY COUNCILS' PROPOSAL

4. The Southern Canterbury Councils believe that **fair representation** is paramount and argues there is more than sufficient reason for the **population-based model** to be disregarded in this circumstance. If, in the context of the Local Electoral Act, a proposal to be under-represented by 30% is acceptable, we fail to understand why a proposal to be overrepresented by 30% is any less acceptable given the vast land mass and natural rural diversity.
5. Suggested: While the other options to enlarge the region to include Selwyn and/or Ashburton Districts within an enlarged region may be closer to the rules on a purely mathematical basis, our view is that the number of councillors suggested would struggle to effectively represent such diverse areas with a unique mixture of population, transport, growth, industry and economies, and urban centres.
6. This is particularly pronounced in the case of including Selwyn District in the ward, as its major population centres, public transport and natural resources are more closely linked to Christchurch City than South Canterbury.
7. For Environment Canterbury to reflect effective democratic representation it is imperative that its governance structure represents the strong **divergent interests** between metropolitan Christchurch and rural Canterbury.
8. The Southern Canterbury Councils submit that **communities of interest** centre on demographics and geography, and resources such as fresh water and its allocation.
9. The South Canterbury Councils believe any attempt to reduce South Canterbury's representation model presents a predicament where the rural communities, which have a substantial interest and concern with the management and allocation of freshwater and land use, are largely **shut out from the decision-making**.
10. The Southern Canterbury Councils believes 14 elected members would ensure representation across Canterbury, **better reflects the rural communities of interest** in geographically large but sparsely populated areas and ensures their **resource management interests** are effectively represented. Enabling a greater sharing of workload amongst more Councillors can only provide benefit to the governance of Environment Canterbury and Southern Canterbury communities.

CONCLUSION

11. The Southern Canterbury Councils firmly reiterate that there are extenuating circumstances where the population-based model is not the most appropriate governance model, and that the representation level remain unchanged for the South Canterbury constituency.
12. The Southern Canterbury Councils firmly submit the most appropriate governance model for Environment Canterbury is for a 14 Elected Member make up, including **two representatives in the South Canterbury constituency**.
13. The South Canterbury Councils believe Option 1 address's the structural divide between metropolitan Christchurch and rural Canterbury and their differing interests. Only with two representatives for South Canterbury will there be an **enduring governance model** for this special region.
14. We look forward to elaborating on this submission at the hearings.