Office of the Mayor

Hon Simon Watts
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10 November 2026

Tēnā koe Minister Watts

Request for exception under section 260A of the Local Government Act 2002 – Manawatū Water Services Committee

Thank you for your letter of 29 September 2026 regarding the changes to voting and quorum rights for non-elected members of Council committees.

At its meeting on 21 October 2026, Manawatū District Council resolved to seek an exception under section 260A of the Local Government Act 2002 to enable the non-elected Chairperson of its Manawatū Water Services Committee to continue to vote and be counted towards quorum for the remainder of the 2025–2028 triennium.

Role of the Committee and its non-elected Chairperson

The Manawatū Water Services Committee provides dedicated governance oversight of Council's water services activities, including operational and financial performance, asset management, project delivery, risk and regulatory compliance.

Council has appointed an independent, non-elected Chairperson to provide dedicated governance leadership and an external perspective over the delivery and development of Manawatū Water Services.

The Chairperson's role extends beyond providing advice or technical expertise. It includes leading the Committee, facilitating consideration of matters and participating in its collective governance and decision-making.

Justification for the exception

Council considers that retaining voting and quorum rights for the independent Chairperson is desirable to support effective governance oversight of its water services activities.

Water services represent a significant area of Council responsibility, involving substantial infrastructure assets, ongoing capital investment, operational risks and regulatory obligations. The Committee has an important role in providing focused oversight of these activities.

The appointment of an independent Chairperson provides dedicated governance leadership and an external perspective to support the Committee in carrying out these responsibilities.

Without an exception, the Chairperson could continue to lead meetings, facilitate discussions and contribute expertise. However, they would be unable to vote or count towards quorum.

Council considers that this would weaken the Chairperson's ability to participate fully in the Committee's collective governance responsibilities. In particular, it would create a distinction between the Chairperson's responsibility for leading the Committee's consideration of significant operational, financial and regulatory matters and their ability to participate in the resulting decisions.

Democratic accountability and statutory framework

Council recognises the Government's objective of strengthening democratic accountability and considers that the proposed exception can be accommodated without undermining that objective.

Elected members would continue to be represented on the Committee, and Council would retain responsibility for determining its membership, terms of reference and delegations. Matters reserved to Council would continue to be determined by elected members.

The requested exception would apply only to the independent Chairperson of the Manawatū Water Services Committee and would be limited to the remainder of the 2025–2028 triennium.

Council considers that this is consistent with section 260A of the Local Government Act 2002, which provides for exceptions where they are necessary or desirable. The request is based on the particular governance arrangements and responsibilities of the Committee, rather than a broader proposition that non-elected members should generally retain voting rights.

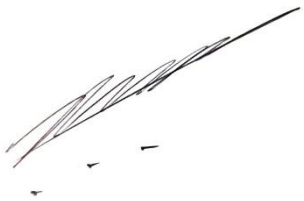
Council is not relying on a comparable statutory precedent, but considers that the dedicated governance oversight required for its water services activities provides sufficient justification for the requested exception.

Request

Council therefore requests that you recommend to the Governor-General an exception from clauses 23(4) and 31A(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002, enabling the non-elected Chairperson of the Manawatū Water Services Committee to continue to vote and be counted towards quorum for the remainder of the 2025–2028 triennium.

A copy of Council resolution MDC 25-28/447 is enclosed in support of this request.

Yours sincerely





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