



Voting: Why Bother?

OTENE: My name is Otene Reweti, and I work for Auckland Council. My job tonight is to open our time up here at another Auckland Conversation.

My karakia that I will use tonight is the council standard, actually — Whakataka te Hau — and it talks about the winds and the cold. The winds that blow on to the land, the winds that blow offshore, and the winds that bring the cold, the snow, the frost. But every day, as the sun breaks through the dawn, it gives us a glimpse of, perhaps, a glorious day. To me, that talks about the voting as well, because is it going to be a wind of change? Is it going to be the normal wind that blows into Tamaki Makaurau? Whatever the wind that blows, perhaps let our blessing be that it brings a glimpse of something glorious for Tamaki Makaurau. Let us give thanks this evening for that.

Your part in this, as you know, to those who usually attend the Conversations, when you hear the words "tuturu whakamaua kia tena", your response is "tena". We're going to have a practice because people like to have a practice. Here we go. Tuturu whakamaua kia tena.

CROWD: tena!

OTENE: OK, 'tena' sounds really tired this evening.

(laughter)

We want "tena!" because we're looking forward to something tonight, looking forward to the conversation that's going to happen.

- Tuturu whakamaua kia tena!

- CROWD: tena!

OTENE: That's much better. tena's wide awake. Your next response — after the words "haumi e, hui e", your response is "taiki e". So we'll practise that. Haumi e, hui e...

CROWD: Taiki e.

OTENE: OK, let's get started this evening. Let's give thanks.

(Maori)

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- Tuturu whakamaua kia tena.
- CROWD: tena.

- OTENE: Haumi e, hui e.
- CROWD: Taiki e.

OTENE: (continues speaking Maori)

Greetings this evening. As we come to another Auckland Conversations, I am reminded...I welcome you here, first of all, to this place, to this theatre where we can talk together, pose questions to the panel, and generally get some idea of what might be changing. My people of Ngati Whatua have a saying —"What is this wind that blows from the northeast, "that blows taonga up on to the sands? "We've placed our marker in the Waitemata "to let people know who we are." But I want to just go back to the beginning of that korero. What is this wind of change that blows? So for the election coming. I am also reminded of a song that talks about the wind as well, and that song goes, "The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind. "The answer is blowing in the wind."

(Maori)

What is this wind of change? The answer, my friends, is blowing in the wind. The answer is blowing in the wind. I finish with a proverb. Ma pango, ma where ka oti te mahi. With the red and the black, the job will be finished. It referred to the traditional colours that Maori used, but in the sense that I want to use it, it actually refers to the different ethnicities, the different people, the different...people or groups that will combine together to... to search for those goals or try to attain the goals for all of us.

(Maori)

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.

(Maori)

OSCAR: Otene Reweti, ladies and gentlemen. Tena koutou, talofa lava, malo e lelei, ni sa bula, kia orana, blah blah blah.

(laughter)

A fifth of the world's languages are spoken in the Pacific, so I have to do them real quickly, otherwise we'd use up our remaining hour and 21 minutes. I'm Oscar Kightley, and I will be facilitating the conversation this evening. Auckland Conversations provides an opportunity

to inspire and stimulate your thinking about the challenges facing Auckland. Tonight we welcome a panel of experts to discuss the question "voting: why bother?" Hmm. Thank you for joining us tonight. This is a fantastic turnout. That's in the script.

(laughter)

And welcome those who are joining us online, who are watching on the Auckland Conversations website. Our thanks to our Auckland partner, Southbase Construction, our design partner, Resene— Was that 'res-en-eh'? Was that a Samoan company?

- Hmm.

- (laughter)

And all our programme supporters. Firstly, a few housekeeping notes. In the unlikely event of an emergency, an alarm will sound. You'll know this noise. It's quite alarming sounding. And you will be directed out of the building by our ushers. Those are the people that aren't allowed to sit down. Easily recognisable. Exits are clearly marked with the word 'exit', which I think is Latin for 'way out'. Is it? Oh. I made that up.

(laughter)

Oh, wow! Is that right? Awesome. Bathrooms are on the lower ground level of the building. Please use them; we want to get our bond back. Does Auckland Council have to pay our bond? Anyway. Down one flight of stairs from the theatre entrance. And our accessible and gender-neutral toilets are on level two. And finally, could you all please turn all mobiles to silent. Now, the format for tonight will be a discussion with our panellists — a conversation —and we will also open up that conversation to questions from the floor. We'll be using Slido, which is an interactive Q&A tool for audience questions. If you have a smart phone — which will be turned to silent — we encourage you to visit [slido.com](https://www.slido.com). That's S-L-I-D-O dot C-O-M. Enter the event code #election and ask your question, and they show up on this flash thing. It's called an iPad. And we will get through as many as we can, and you can submit your question any time during the conversation. Alternatively, feel free to raise your hand and go, "Hey!" during the interactive Q&A to ask a question. You are welcome to tweet during the event — I know you want to — using the hashtag #AKLConversations. And we always try to ensure that the Auckland Conversations events are inclusive and accessible; an on-demand viewing of the event, a full transcript, and captioning on the event and presentations will be available on the Auckland Conversations website in the next few days. Whoa, s***. I better not swear. I'm going to be checking that's in the full transcription. And now let's set the scene.

OK, on to tonight's conversation. The decisions made around the council table impact us more directly than those made at central government level. So why do so few people vote in the local

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elections, and what can be done to get more people involved in local politics? This September and October, New Zealanders go to the polls to choose the people who will represent them in local government for the next three years. While voter turnout at the last general election in 2017 was 79%, which I think is amazing, nationwide turnout at the last local election in 2016 was 43%. In Auckland, it was even lower.

- Shame, Auckland.

- (laughter)

Shame. 38.5% — just that percentage of Aucklanders chose to vote, and yet, local government affects nearly every aspect of our daily lives. Auckland's mayor, councillors, and local board members make decisions on everything from, you know, rubbish collections, libraries, playgrounds, how many lights each neighbourhood gets to the public transport system that moves us around the city and the amount we pay in rates. Let's just get on with it, shall we?

I am now pleased to bring our panellists on to the stage. Please help me in welcoming director of ActionStation and co-founder and chair of RockEnrol, Laura O'Connell Rapira; senior lecturer and design director of the Design+Democracy project at Massey University, Karl Kane; chief executive of Superdiversity Institute for Law at ChenPalmer, Marina Matthews; senior advisor of external relations, ATEED chair, Auckland District Licensing Agency and former councillor of the Auckland Council, Michael Goudie. Did I say your surname right?

MICHAEL: It's like the car with a G in front of it — Goudie.

OSCAR: Oh, Goudie. Sorry. Apologies.

Michael Goudie, ladies and gentlemen. And also journalist currently editing the new local elections pop-up section of The Spinoff — an awesome website — Hayden Donnell.

(applause)

And before we kick into this conversation, I would just like to get a show of hands with our audience and wonder who here has voted in a local body election? OK, thank you. (stammers) What? Hey? Who hasn't?

- (laughter)

- Shame, Oscar. Shame.

Wow. That's interesting. So I guess, to kick us off, I'd like to ask each of you the same question, just to start this conversation — why? Why do you think not many people vote? Laura, can we start with you? Actually, anybody who wants to go ahead, but I want to ask that of each of you. Why don't we vote? Or why don't enough of us vote?

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LAURA: Kia ora, everyone. I think the reason's really complex. For the last five years, I've been working on a campaign called RockEnrol, which my flatmates and I started because we were wanting to make political engagement more interesting to people in our age group. I was an event organiser at the time. I was primarily interested in organising parties that raised funds for environmental charities, and that's what I saw as my offering to doing something meaningful, and decided to translate that model into running parties — we did this at the General Election in 2014 all around the country — where the only way a person could get a ticket is if they made a promise to vote. We weren't trying to get them to vote for a particular political party; we were just trying to get them started in the voting habit. And so making a promise meant filling in a form that basically gave us their name, their email, their phone number, and ticking a box that says, "I promise to vote in the election", and then in the weeks leading up to the election, we'd give them a call to say, "Hey, have you actually voted?" And in planning that, we dug into the research into why young people don't vote, and actually, if you look at the demographics of the people who are least likely to vote, it's people who are Maori, it's people who are Pasifika, it's people who have recently migrated to New Zealand, it's people from low-income or low-education backgrounds, and it's people who live in rural areas. And if you look at the reasons for each of those groups, it's actually very complex. So for Maori, a lot of it has to do with an intergenerational distrust of the Crown and its agents due to our colonial history.

- OSCAR: That's a biggie.

- LAURA: Yeah. (chuckles)

If you look at Pasifika people, it was a lack of a sense of belonging, because when a lot of the migration from the Pacific to New Zealand happened, we sort of just put them in one place and left them and then raided them early in the morning and have never apologised for that. And so the reasons are really, really complex. And then when it comes to local government, I think one of the additional factors over the last 10, 15 years, which I think Hayden can speak more to as well, is that we no longer buy newspapers, which means that there's no longer advertising revenue for newspapers, which means that newsrooms have shrunk and there are fewer and fewer journalists able to cover what's going on in local government, and because of that, we're not hearing about what's happening, and therefore it's more difficult to engage. That just gives a sense of how many complex factors there are involved in why people don't vote. The other thing, of course, that's happening globally is a swing towards populism and the return of Nazis, frankly, and that's terrifying. We live in a society that has so far failed to deliver the types of changes for marginalised people, and people are starting to lose faith in that and look to strong men — authoritarian alternatives to the status quo, and that's concerning.

OSCAR: Thank you, Laura. Wow.

(applause)

As you say, that's mad complex. Karl?

KARL: Yeah, kia ora. (Maori) Why don't people vote? I'll go a bit more meta. I think if you look at the systems we have of governance in Aotearoa and look at where we've got them from and when we got them from... Is that a thing — "when we got them from"? But the systems and structures we imported from 17th, 18th century England. You know, Westminster — what modes

have represented democracy. And then we look at our Pacific contexts in the 21st century are digitally connected, deliberative, immediate. These very different lives. So we've got very old tools, old political tools, and we're asking this generation to engage with these very old tools, and I'm not sure they can. I'm not sure that they are...are able to look at the things they want to affect and the change they want to effect in the world and see that, once every three years, ticking a box is a way of achieving that. I think we've got some issues with the structures, and I think there are some ways that rangatahi in particular can hack into those structures to make them more their own and more useful to them. But currently I think, yeah, we've got the wrong tools for the job, and we're approaching the tools we have in a really clumsy way. So I think we can do better with what we've got. But ultimately, when people do turn up and vote, we can evolve those tools and make them a little bit more suitable for our 21st century youth.

OSCAR: Thank you, Karl.

MARINA: (Maori) I guess I would follow on from what Karl had said and say that I think the importance of voting starts in school and with our good civics education. And if you don't have your children or your tamariki or your rangatahi learning about the importance of voting, then they won't enrol, and then they won't vote. I was just looking at the title before — 'Voting: Why Bother?' It should go a step back — 'Enrolling: Why Do It? 'So That You Can Vote: Why Bother?'

Because you can't vote if you're not enrolled. And I think that the importance of civics education is not only to learn about our history, Aotearoa's history, but also to learn about the importance of a democracy and having our part or letting the children know about their part in New Zealand and Aotearoa's democracy.

- OSCAR: Kia ora.

- MARINA: Thank you.

MICHAEL: Hi, everyone. I'm Goudie. I might just read from Hayden's notes on this one...

- (laughter)

- HAYDEN: Nah, those are mine.

MICHAEL: Yeah, what they said. Nah, honestly. I think largely you've picked up a lot. Particularly, I think, that educational piece is huge, and I...I'm from Rodney, grew up Coromandel provincial, and I think, even just being on the fringes on the city, where there's

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more awareness than that, I just didn't know about it. Like, I had no idea. I didn't know what it entailed. If one particular thing hadn't piqued my interest, I probably would remain with that unwashed mass and just let things go. I think local government particularly — it's not as sexy; it's got a bit of a bad rap; it's this big beast that sits in town, and the wheels churn. It's that old "How am I going to be able to influence it anyway?" And to the contrary. I think your ability to influence — because no one really participates — is huge. So I think it's heaps of things, I think, in New Zealand, where there actually needs to be a bit of a culture change, and that isn't a quick fix

over a couple of elections, and it needs to start deep, and it is extremely complex on a whole lot of levels. I think the one piece that I always go back to was I got right through...Well I dropped out, failed high school.

- OSCAR: What school did you go to?

- MICHAEL: Orewa College.

OSCAR: Oh, OK.

- MICHAEL: Yeah, it's not a good one.

- (laughter)

The one that got all the expellees from all the other ones. So I think even when I got through, finally, when a university would take me, I still didn't really know about what local government was or is or how it lived in my day-to-day. So, yeah, I think an educational piece from... And we see offshore they do it really well, and probably they've got some other mechanisms, but that educational piece is key, I think.

OSCAR: Thank you. Hayden?

HAYDEN: I just think everyone else got all the good ones, especially Laura. I feel like you kinda hogged a few right up front.

OSCAR: I won't ask her first next time.

HAYDEN: Yeah. I think that probably local government in general is probably just seen as really boring, particularly by young people. I mean, I was talking to a guy the other day. He's a young lawyer, so he's pretty highly engaged, and he's just like, "Oh, you're editing The Spinoff's local government section?" It was like a pitying tone. Like, a really pitying tone.

- (laughter)

Like, "Oh, how are you going to survive?" And you — I was talking to you about being a councillor. And you were bored as hell.

- (laughter)

But my hot take is that local government is actually probably more exciting than central government. Like, what's central government doing? It's working out the structure of PHOs or something. That's not interesting either. It's just that there's interesting people there. And a cycleway coming to your door is far more interesting than that or over the Harbour Bridge or a new park or something; that's actually going to make a difference to my life. But people don't give a sh...

- hoot.

- (laughter)

Yeah. And I guess that message isn't coming through. Maybe that does come back to what you say. I don't know. I don't give the media too much credit; we're useless. But I mean, we probably do have some kind of an influence. There is a stayed media environment. I think probably— I love him; he's a lovely guy, but Bernard Orsman has kind of terrorised Auckland for multiple decades.

(chuckles)

These local representatives that are focused on rates and these small issues where they're constantly terrorised about having a vision, being criticised for it, and that probably has made a difference. We've had multiple decades, in Auckland in particular, of local representatives that had small ideas, and we're still making up for it. We built a four-lane harbour bridge.

- (laughter)

- Oh yeah. Sorry.

- I feel like we're depressed.

- OSCAR: I know what you mean.

HAYDEN: I'm sorry. Anyway, people are probably alienated from the system a little bit.

OSCAR: Yeah, because I remember reading once about Mayor Robbie. Anyone remember Sir Dove-Myer Robinson?

MAN IN AUDIENCE: I was on the council with him!

OSCAR: You were—? Wow.

HAYDEN: Did you vote against the trams and all that? The rail?

(laughs)

OSCAR: I remember reading an article once, and he was saying that two things he really wanted to do was light rail and a line of palm trees up Queen Street, and I think most people at that time were like, "Oh, it'll cost too much," which seems to be the public's answer to everything.

HAYDEN: Oh, it's the way we cover it as well. It's like, "How much does it cost?" You know. It's not like, "What kind of city are we trying to build?" And probably that has embedded quite a bad culture. Your issues were much more important, but that might be something too.

OSCAR: There was a lot of really awesome answers, and I wonder whether... Do you think it's fair to kind of group an essence of all those answers as a disconnect between the people and the process? Would that be a fair summation of some of those answers?

HAYDEN: Did anyone talk about how bad the postal system is for young people as well?

- (laughter)

- MICHAEL: I think we're getting there.

HAYDEN: Yeah. That's bad too.

KARL: I think that goes to the structures as well; we're taking post boxes away from communities while asking people to conduct a postal ballot.

- HAYDEN: It's crazy.

- KARL: Yeah.

HAYDEN: Most young people haven't seen a letter.

(laughter)

I mean, this is the thing. You've got a postal system. You've got 80-year-olds that have lived in the same house for 40 years. They're going to be enrolled. They're going to be in the same place. They're going to get their voting papers sent. A young person might have moved flat four times in the last three years.

(laughs) Because they got kicked out by the guy that's been living in his house for 40 years.

- (laughter)

- It's their investment property.

So, I mean, I don't have the solution to what's a better system.

MARINA: Wow. I'm from Invercargill. You may have noticed that I talk a bit different. And I feel that these are really Auckland-related issues, and I don't know what our two Wellington colleagues...

KARL: Kia ora.

MARINA: I was just thinking that in Invercargill, for example, it has, I think, about 85% participation rate in voting, but that's possibly because they've got such a big personality with Mayor Tim Shadbolt. And when he first came into the city council down in Invercargill, he had said that he was going to push a concrete mixer through the main streets of Invercargill. He was quite clever because he didn't define what main streets were, and he only went up and down one particular street. But all the elderly, all the young people, all the people in between, they all went and saw him. I went, and I was about 5.

- OSCAR: Was there not much else happening in Invercargill?

- (laughter)

On this day, Marina?

MICHAEL: "Come on, kids; the Mayor's pushing a concrete mixer! Let's all go out."

HAYDEN: It's why the Blues suck — because there's too many things to do in Auckland. So when you're in the deep south, they've got some good, strong rugby teams down there; there's not much else to do.

OSCAR: I guess... Let's... I mean... There's so many fantastic questions coming in, and I'll get to some of those after this next round of questions from each of you. The talk always turns to solutions. Laura, what could central and local government do to make participating in democracy more meaningful and inclusive, given we all want that and we all accept that it's going to take a culture change?

LAURA: Oh. So, I think there's a number of things. I do think education is one part of it. I do stress that it is just one part of it, though, because whilst I think... Like, the US has had civics education in their schools for a long time, and it's not exactly... Ehh... (laughs) So I think citizenship is one part of it. And when I say citizenship, I mean it goes beyond civics. It's not just the mechanics of local government or central government and how it works and how many MPs there are and what a select committee is and all that kind of stuff. It's the power of social movements. Who is Eva Rickard? What was Parihaka? How did that happen? All those sorts of things. Bastion Point. And I think it would be really awesome to learn about social movements

and the role that people — ordinary people — have played in effecting change in New Zealand. So I think that's one part of it. I also think it's about practice from a young age. Still in high schools, young people don't actually get to vote who their head boy or their head girl is. They get to vote for their student representative on the board of trustees, but they don't vote for the head boy or head girl; that's appointed. And so we don't even actually practise voting in schools, which seems quite flawed.

OSCAR: I never knew that. So the teachers pick the head—? Wow.

LAURA: Yeah, they do. The person who does end up getting on to the board of trustees — the student rep — they're usually just one person among, you know, six to 12 parents or adults, so they're the lone voice, so their first experience of governance isn't necessarily that great either because they're the sole voice advocating for that. And so I think, at the school level, it would be really great to put in place that we have two student representatives on each board so that they feel supported in that. I think there's a couple of structural things that we could do. One of the reasons why I think voter turnout is higher in places like Invercargill is because there are still quite strong community ties there, and in a population as diverse and widespread as Auckland, it's quite hard to achieve those community ties. And there's a really interesting — and quite terrifying — piece of research that was done by Unitec in West Auckland studying people's perceptions of crime in their community and then support for certain responses to those perceptions of crime. And basically what they found is that older Pakeha — usually men — who spent a lot of time on social media were more likely or more inclined to support punitive measures— They were more likely to think that there was more crime in their community and that their communities were more affected by crime and then therefore more likely to support more policing in that area, whereas people of colour from those same communities were less likely to perceive that there was a lot of crime in their community and also therefore more likely to support greater investment in community event. Alongside ethnic background being one of the things, it was also about social media use, and so if we think about the role that social media plays... It's meant to bring us together, but it also is radicalising some people and pushing us into bubbles and sort of isolating us. How can we use the tools that we have today — and this is something that I think Karl's really great at — the internet, to bring communities closer together rather than polarise us and push us apart?

OSCAR: Thank you, Laura. Karl, generally speaking, the younger you are, it seems the less likely you are to vote. There's all these usual stereotypes about young people — lazy, self-absorbed. That's just me.

(laughter)

Or are there other reasons they don't turn out to vote?

KARL: Kia ora. Noam Chomsky was on Radio New Zealand a couple of years ago, talking to Kim Hill, and he made a really, really important point — that there are more young people engaged in direct political action and activity now than in 1968. And when we think about 20th century history in the late '60s, we imagine this zeal and this revolutionary moment in time, and there are more young people engaged in direct political action and activity now than there were in the late '60s. They just do it differently. And this goes back to the structure of the tools, the levers that they have to pull. They're more likely to be conscious consumers. They're more likely to be activists or take direct action and be active in an oil company or a sweatshop-using company — more likely to take a direct type of action than they are to wait three years to tick a box and hope—

OSCAR: They're all about doing something now.

KARL: They want to do something now, but I think that's really important, because we underutilise this talent. We've got this wonderful talent. And they've also got the most to gain or lose, right? They're going to be alive the longest. If we f*** it up now, they're the ones who have got to live with the consequences. And if we get it right now, they're the ones who get to reap the rewards of the investment now, even if it is a higher cost, and that's the thing which the media foreground. But the kids are all right. And I think that after Christchurch, we saw that, and I think a lot of older voters were really impressed by the rangitahi in Christchurch.

OSCAR: People just love hating on young people, eh?

KARL: Yeah, but... They don't turn out, but... This is my one point I want to labour, because this is my kaupapa.

OSCAR: You've already quoted Noam Chomsky.

- KARL: Awesome.

- (laughter)

If I look at how young people are educated in schools today, they're taught to be collaborative, deliberative, to reach consensus, and to work together to build something. And then I look at how politics is presented. It's adversarial. It's red vs blue, Bloods vs Crips. Parliament is two tribes separated by a man with a mace. That's some Game of Thrones s***, you know? And we expect our young people, who have this different education, to look at that and go, "I'm in." And they're not. So I think the better behaved politicians and we are in civics and how we talk about it, the more deliberative and open and honest and evidence-based that we can be, the more we're going to get those rangitahi to vote, because they are engaged; they're just not ticking the box.

MARINA: Can I ask Karl a question, then? What do you think the difference of our young central government MPs make? Like Chloe Swarbrick, for example.

KARL: I reckon in that lies the seed of getting them to tick the box. I think we need to make a compelling argument that once you're inside the tent, once you're sitting at the table, we can evolve these things, that they're not concrete. There's a sense that these things are immutable, unchangeable — you know, processes and structures and systems and traditions — but they can all be changed. And when I see cross party— The homosexual law reform was a good example. When I see this cross-party consensus coming together — that's what gets them going. So I think with people like Chloe, it's a really good example of someone going into the tent and changing things from the inside.

(stammers)

It's that old thing in social justice — "if I can't see it, I can't be it". That little bit of modelling, I think, is really, really good.

OSCAR: Laura, you mentioned crime before, and last week, there was an incident at St Luke's, and it was very sad for the people that were affected that the Michael Hill Jeweller was broken into. But on the other hand, the young offenders caught the train.

(laughter)

So they're using public transport, which is great. They caught the train to Ranui. Not casting aspersions on people from Ranui. Marina. At the last Auckland local government elections, there were approximately 70% of European voters who voted. European — I guess that means Pakeha as well, not just people from Europe. However, for other ethnicities, the participation was significantly lower. In the Chinese community, 57% of voters. For Maori, 50%. For Samoan, 46%. What can we do to increase voter participation across all ethnicities, given that, when you look at Maori, Pasifika, and Asian, they make up 50% of Auckland's population and there are over 200 ethnicities in all?

MARINA: That's a good question. One of the things is that in the 2013 Census — and I'm not going to talk about the 2018 Census because I keep getting told off — but in the 2013 Census, there was 87,000 people who couldn't speak English. Sorry, 80,000 people in Auckland who couldn't speak any English. They didn't have any English-speaking ability. They weren't ESOL — English as a Second Language. They just couldn't speak it. And one of the things about those stats that you just said, Oscar, is that we need to make it easier for people with English as a second language or no language — no English — to vote. And I could bore you with regulation 34 of the local election regulations.

- OSCAR: I love that one. Go on.

- (laughter)

- MICHAEL: Remind me.

- OSCAR: Remind us. Which says that you have to be able to vote. You can have a special vote if you can't speak English, but the other concern about that regulation is that it doesn't say any requirements for the person that is with you, watching you or translating that vote for you. They don't have any obligation to keep your vote a secret. We at the Superdiversity Institute, we've done some research, and we've seen that quite a lot of people are put off by the fact that their translator could then tell their vote to every man and his dog. So I think making the enrolment forms accessible to different languages— Did you say that there's 163 different languages spoken in Auckland? So making the enrolment information different languages and then making the voting forms in different languages. I know that we do have Maori, Pasifika, Chinese, but there are 163 different languages.

LAURA: What do you think about automatic enrolment, meaning that any...? So if you get a driver's licence or a passport or anything like that, they automatically enrol you, and so then it's opt-out rather than opt-in.

MARINA: That's a fantastic idea. Yeah.

- LAURA: I agree.

- (laughter)

MICHAEL: Are you running this year?

HAYDEN: "What do you think of this thing that I obviously support and am proposing?"

MICHAEL: I think that's such a... I'm in stakeholder management, and you think about when you're impacting communities, the lengths you go to for just different engagement or partnership plans for all types of communities. Whether it's building the Waterview Tunnel, you think about all the schools, communities, ethnicities, all that, and you're consciously coming up with ways of how you include them within that. And we probably... The Invercargill to Auckland phase is we are so disconnected. And I think we probably have got a long way to go in terms of coming up with... recognising the different cultural values and how, then, particularly voting or local government might impact those values and why you would get enthused. That's a task for a small army in itself, but... Yeah, if you could tackle that, that would be another good initiative.

OSCAR: When I look at those stats, when you think of the chunk of the community that isn't being represented, and I guess...that's quite sad. Sorry, Marina, I'll come back to you in a sec. Michael, how does voter turnout impact the quality of elected members?

- MICHAEL: Yeah, this is...

- (laughter)

I was guilty by association, being an elected member. Look, I would put almost my business hat on when I think about this, because often a lot of people think, "Why would I vote from the voting side?" When you're an elected member, who's your market? Right? Who's your voting market? So if you're in business — you've got a product — who are you marketing it to? And it's not too dissimilar. I've got a lot of friends, even in this room, who are elected members, and they're probably part of the cream, you know, from all extremes, but they're the types of elected members you probably want — who are active, engaged. They might not be my way inclined, or I might not agree, but actually I don't care because they're just engaged and they're representing their community. Good job. And how many times do I talk to a politician and you talk about an issue, and you kind of know, socially, where it should be at, and they're like, "Oh, but... they don't vote. Why would I...?" "I'm not going to go fight in that corner."

OSCAR: So, did you focus on the people that you know do turn out?

MICHAEL: Well, I think I was an outlier only in the fact that somehow I could get in but I felt very lonely or isolated, even, in this beast of council because I felt like I represented a silent... a silent...majority— Well, not a majority. Just my community, to be honest. My community weren't engaged at all. You go years on end in this beast, trying to represent people that aren't there. They're not there to vote. They don't care. And so you're kind of the only one sort of holding your hand up. That's an outlier, I think, view. You could look at the other 80% of your elected representatives, and I don't need to ask the question. I'm not proud of our entirety of our elected members. It could be a lot better.

(laughter)

Honestly.

HAYDEN: You were the Richard Hills before Richard Hills, eh?

MICHAEL: But I'm not... (stammers) I'm just not that way inclined to stay in there and be that, and there's others that are here today that are. They're fighting the fight, man, and even to go through silly season right now in elections, it's not a nice place to be in. We know that we have very low turnout, and we know the quality of our elected members. We know the quality of our decision makers. We know. And there's something inherently broken. Now, what's going to change that? A bigger market. So, from an elected member's point of view or from a voter point of view, you inherently want more people to vote because that's the change, that's the accountability, that's the exposure, that's the interest, that's the engagement. And I think that would only lead to more contestability and more people being interested in running. I think you would still get people electing those parts of the community that need to be and right through to having good quality decision makers, which leads to, you know... leads to better outcomes.

- OSCAR: So it does affect the quality in that case?

- MICHAEL: 100%. 100%. Do we want to stay in at 38% and turn up to a local board meeting and only three of them are actually engaged?

HAYDEN: That's the incentives, eh? I feel like some councillors that are doing really good, progressive change are almost doing kind of charity work in a way because they're just making it harder for themselves. Like, you look at the stats. I wrote them down. I mean, the easy way to get in is to appeal to old Pakeha people.

MICHAEL: Mine was middle-aged women.

(laughter)

Honestly. Honestly. Great voter turnout from my area, and it was like, "Well, that's an easy market." That came out real bad.

- (laughter)

- MARINA: You tapped the cougar market.

- (laughter)

HAYDEN: Didn't know this would go there.

OSCAR: I guess that's smart, though, Michael. I guess that's clever.

- MICHAEL: I might leave now. They vote. They vote. There's an easy way to get—You know, if you're local board, you can get in on 1000 votes. 1000 votes.

- OSCAR: Is that all?

MICHAEL: Yeah. If that in some local board areas.

OSCAR: I'm running.

MICHAEL: I think this is the other thing — people think it's a lot more daunting or a lot bigger than what it actually is. If you think you can represent your community better, no matter where you're from, at age you are, you've got a real good shot of getting in. Like, it's pretty incredible.

OSCAR: That's actually really encouraging, eh?

MICHAEL: You do it. Go on.

- OSCAR: Yeah. I will. - (laughter)

- MICHAEL: You heard it here.

- OSCAR: I've got till tomorrow. Marina, I saw you had your mic up before. Were you going to chime in with something?

MARINA: Oh, no, I was going to say, adding to Michael's question about quality of candidates, I mean, given that Auckland is 50% Asian, Pacific, and Maori, we need to see more people — or more representation — in our candidates from those communities. As Michael says, there are a lot of Pakeha... I remember Hekia Parata used to say that they're "pale, stale males", and there are a lot of pale—

- OSCAR: Sorry, say that again. Pale...?

- MARINA: Stale and male.

- OSCAR: Whoa. Full on.

- MICHAEL: Also known as the CEOs of all the CCOs.

- (laughter)

- HAYDEN: He works for a CEO at a CCO!

OSCAR: I want to get to some of these questions that have come through. Here's a really interesting one — why not make voting compulsory?

LAURA: I think if you're going to make voting compulsory, you have to make space for people who don't see themselves represented in any of the options available, because if you're making people do something by compulsion... I don't know. Firstly, I feel quite uncomfortable about that for reasons I can't yet articulate. There's a cool TED Talk that's put forward by... I can't remember his name. He's a UK journalist, and he talks about this idea that what if... So, there's 120 seats in central government, in Parliament, and let's say 30% of people don't vote. Then the equivalent number of seats would have to stay empty, and then political parties and candidates would have to try and find out what those 30% of people who didn't vote actually want and then try and vie for their votes, which I think would be a much more kind of responsive, participatory way of running things, as opposed to forcing people into choosing options, in which case, if they're forced to choose an option, where's the option to say, "I don't like any of youse." You know? And so I think that aspect of things is quite important. But on the diversity thing in Auckland, I think one of the other things to note that's really important is class. In 2015,

Statistics New Zealand found that the individual net worth of an individual Pakeha person was \$114,000. Median Maori — \$23,000. Median Pasifika person — \$14,000. And so you have a \$100,000 gap between the median Pasifika person and the median Pakeha.

OSCAR: God, it's like we're all actors.

(laughter)

LAURA: And so we have to think about... One of the things I've been thinking quite a lot about was the Election Access Fund Bill that Mojo Mathers put through, which is basically a pool of funds that candidates in political parties can apply for — it's in its second reading in central government at the moment — to make their events more accessible to people with disabilities. So if you're a person with a disability who wants to run for central or local government, you can apply for that. If you're wanting a person to do sign language interpretation at your event, you can apply for that. So on and so forth. And I started thinking about what would it look like if we had an equivalent fund for young people for ensuring that young people can actually participate, because we have these huge ethnic gaps — or a racial wealth gap, let's say — but we also know from that same Statistics New Zealand data that young people overall have the lowest median net worth of all age demographics. It's about \$1000. Many have accumulated student debt and don't have any assets yet, and so if we're serious about getting more young people to participate, we have to wrap the support around them so they can actually do that. And so that's for young people but also for people from different ethnic backgrounds as well.

OSCAR: Who else would like to chime in on that? Why don't we make voting compulsory? Is that a road we could take?

KARL: I think we could do better than that. I think it's a little bit like "kiss your aunty" stuff. Democracy is pretty special, and a lot of people have fought very hard for it, and it's an amazing privilege to be part of, and I think if we did all of the things which have been suggested — we teach civics better, we empower people, we engage them, we use the tools and techniques that we have better and more deliberately and more openly — I think we don't need to do that. I think that making it compulsory—

OSCAR: Has it worked in Aussie?

KARL: Well, no, it hasn't worked in Aussie. And the 'quality' of vote, which is an awful thing to say, but the quality of vote is low. And I'm actually...

- OSCAR: That's Aussies, though.

- KARL: Yeah, yeah. (laughter) I'm actually OK with someone electing... so values judgement, but I'm actually OK with someone electing not to vote. If they've thought about it, they've seen

the options, they've enrolled, and they've actually spoiled their ballot, made some kind of protest vote, I'm OK with that. I think it's a valid political act. And I don't think that forcing me to kiss my aunty is the way to...

- OSCAR: What if your aunty's hot?

- (laughter)

KARL: She's not.

HAYDEN: I really liked what you said.

OSCAR: I hope your aunty's not watching.

HAYDEN: I just wanted to reinforce what Laura said about where it's an opt-out system instead of an opt-in. Sounds really good. It sounds like a compromise between the two extremes where now it's almost impossible for some people to vote. Who knows how to use a... postal box? And, you know, where you actually have to make a considered decision if you don't want to vote. -

OSCAR: Hey, do we all know—?

- KARL: Can I just jump in? I think we don't want to skim over this postal thing too. Even within rohe... In Wellington, we have STV — a different system from first-past-the-post in Auckland. The complications of working out how that system works... If we do get these rangatahi engaged and involved and they're there and they're ready and then we ask them to work out the magic strategy of "How am I going to cast this vote, and what's the impact going to be?", let alone getting to the post box, wherever the fuck that is. But that's a complex system.

HAYDEN: That's why John Key's flag referendum was such a service to the nation.

- (laughter)

-OSCAR: What do you mean?

HAYDEN: It taught us about STV ranking.

OSCAR: Hayden... (laughter)

HAYDEN: Same concept.

OSCAR: I feel like this is a room with a big choir who realise this is important and we know these things are going to take time and a culture shift, but I guess, Hayden, what's...? This

election's next month, and there are things that need to be... I mean, it would be great if we could suddenly, overnight, flip the turnout so that the next election had a higher participation. What do you think is at stake at this election, particularly for Auckland's young people?

HAYDEN: I think, first of all, it's just representation. What are the stats? I wrote them down. I mean, the average age on council — I'm going to read it. 75% of candidates are over 45. 76% of elected representatives are Pakeha compared to 60% of Auckland's population. It's reasonably dire. And I've kind of got a bee in my bonnet lately. You'll be surprised... Just about the number of projects that council handles — and Richard will know this; you'll know this — that are for the distant future. They're 30-year projects. You're thinking about rail to the North Shore. And these are projects that are primarily for young people. I'm sorry, old people, but you are going to die, and they are the ones that are primarily deciding whether we, in the future, are going to be able to have cycleways and rail over the harbour. Come on! It's ridiculous. Of course we should. But they put it off. You know, we are letting people that won't have a stake in the future decide our future, and I find that a little bit annoying, though I think they should probably still have votes. (laughter) (laughs, stammers) The other point is I just think that the council in particular — and this is boring, probably, to anyone but me, who's a sad nerd — but the council's in a reasonably precarious situation this time around. I think there's been a consensus over the last probably six years which is in favour of a compact city based around public transport, and that's been advancing at a really... Even though it's probably felt very slow, there's been reasonable progress on that. And if a few electorates this time round flip, then that could go away. There's lots of people in local government that have made whole careers out of saying no to things because it's easy and it's popular and it appeals to older Pakeha voters. I'm really sorry, but there are a crew out there that just want to say no to things and want to hold back change, and it's conservative, and I think that is a risk. And you can see it a little bit in the mayoral race, not that that's the main thing, but where John Tamihere is accusing Phil Goff of having an anti-car strategy and this kind of thing. It's this "let's pull it back and let's make Auckland what it used to be". And we've tried that way of thinking. We tried it for multiple decades, and it's why our city is fucked now. (laughter) And it's what we're trying— (laughs) We've tried to be conservative, and we made a four-lane harbour bridge, and we pulled up the tramways. I mean, it's not that dramatic, but I want to sound a warning.

MICHAEL: Can I just jump in a bit? I don't think it's that bleak — quite that bleak.

HAYDEN: That was a little bit apocalyptic. I'm really sorry.

MICHAEL: I just think we're in a really interesting time, I think, particularly in local government sense, particularly in Auckland sense. I wouldn't have rerun out of the old Rodney District Council if the Super City hadn't happened. I think the Super City sort of jacked the votes a bit because it was of interest. And then it went straight back down to probably trending the wrong way. I think the last three years has been probably the first solid three years of elected members on social and communicating in a completely different way. So I think in 2000-and whenever it

was... we were throwing around Facebook signs on our billboards, and we were the only ones doing it. Where now I probably only think it's the last three years that I think elected members have sort of switched on to using it properly, to engage with communities. So much easier to get to know a representative, not just the BS that they put through in X amount of words in a pamphlet that comes out before elections. I do hope that it is... it is coming back. And you think about some of the real hot issues that have been floating around the city, not just in central, and even the play-over, all the investments coming to central — what does that mean to Rodney or Manukau or wherever it would be? I think these are starting to... You're starting to get a little bit more involvement. The major hurdle to that is just decent participation. You know, we put out an annual plan, and — we've touched on it — the archaic nature of how we engage with... Which often is actually guided by legislation around "what does a submission look like?" and blah blah blah. Actually, there's way better ways to tap into communities to actually have active civic participation. And we're still stuck in this sort of self-perpetuating system that isn't allowing you to actually... yeah, isn't allowing you to sort of penetrate in and make what you think is a difference. I'd hope that— I've been described as unnatural optimistic, so I'll just put that out there.

OSCAR: I've heard that about you, Michael.

MICHAEL: It's my bio on one of those social places. But I think there's going to be a better turnout this year. I think about Takapuna, Manukau, some of these quite hot issues and the involvement that council has in that, so I wouldn't be surprised to see a better turnout, and I think the fact that we are getting a lot more exposure, it is a lot more front-of-mind, beyond the local rag. I would think that we are on hopefully a better transition. Hopefully.

OSCAR: A question's come through here — why is electronic voting not available in this election cycle? Now, I think Marguerite could maybe speak more to that when she wraps up, but there was a move by a group of councils in the North Island, but the cost was prohibitive and cost too much, and central government wouldn't come in, so I think it was shelved. But do you think that's a good idea? Do you think central government does need to come to the party or that it's in council's best interest to actually make this a reality?

MICHAEL: Well, how do you define best interests? Because you could cut that a lot of different ways. Government could change that overnight, honestly. There are so many more sensitive transactions I've done in the last week online than the risk around who I'm going to vote for in my local elections. I'm not an IT whizz. I don't know two ways about anything. But surely there's a lot of levers and mechanisms we could pull. Part of my reason I'm even a bit disconnected from all that. It seems to be such a no-brainer. I just don't get why it hasn't been done.

OSCAR: Even if it does cost a few million?

LAURA: I don't think it would work. In Estonia, they've had e-voting for quite a while, and it had a great effect on turnout at the beginning, when it was novel, and then it's done what all the other democracies have done, and voter decline has continued. And if we had it, we'd have to do it with our RealMe accounts, which is actually not that easy. (chuckles) Like, I don't actually think it would be lowering that many barriers. I actually worry quite a lot about the tech because all of my friends who are very tech-savvy worry about it, and so I just sort of trust them. And it's sort of one of those things like you could put it online, but it fundamentally doesn't fix all of the inequities that I've been describing today about the reasons why people don't vote. It doesn't fix colonisation. It doesn't fix intergenerational distrust between the Crown and Maori. It doesn't fix the driver's licensing issue, which is one of the reasons young people, particularly in rural areas, don't vote — is they just simply cannot get to a place to vote because they don't have their own cars or they don't have a driver's licence or they have to work on the farm and no one's going to take them to post their vote or give their vote and things like that. So, yeah, moving voting online won't fix any of those problems, and I think it's one of those things that we jump to as a silver bullet, but there's no such thing.

MARINA: I know that I said that I wasn't going to mention it, but 2018 Census. (laughter) I mean, I know that, having talked to Liz MacPherson, the chief statistician, yeah, there were lots of positive learnings that came out of their first online census, but they didn't have a high turnout. I would agree with online or e-voting if it was coupled with postal and if it was couple with ballot boxes. I mean, you couldn't just have it by itself.

KARL: If I could add one thing to that, if you're going to make online voting the only way of voting, then internet access becomes a human right, and that's a big commitment. And just to take over what you were saying about trust, I think trust is vital. A lot of this is to do with— And this is the pointy-headed stuff. It's to do with a social contract. And even the language used. I know I'm in Auckland, but talking about the market and talking about customers and stuff, these are citizens we're talking about, and I think that language matters, and it's part of the social contract, which can be broken. Post-Cambridge Analytica, you know, post-Brexit, and interference and 'fake news' and all that stuff, there is a trust issue, and if we do put voting online, we're taking a really sacred and important thing and we're putting it into a space that people don't trust — increasingly don't trust — and I worry about that. I hold this act of voting really high, and, if anything, I'd do the opposite; I'd ceremonialise it. I'd make it an event, make it a really cool thing.

OSCAR: Like free beers.

KARL: F***, I don't care. No. 1 Pancakes, man. (laughter) But I think that the silver bullet is just a really tempting, quick fix.

MICHAEL: I guess I wasn't— It's just one tool, I think, that should be— It feels so archaic, the way that we are, and it was just another tool. And, actually, the trust thing is really interesting. I

was talking to a mate about putting his money in Kiwibank, and even that, he was like, "No way. It's government." And I was sort of like... There is something entrenched and inherent in this trust issue, and I think that does play a big part in it.

MARINA: Look at Hayden's face — he's cringing.

OSCAR: Hayden, why are you cringing?

HAYDEN: Oh, no, no, I just think he should put his money in Kiwibank. - It's fine. - (laughter) -

MICHAEL: It's not that scary, eh?

- HAYDEN: Yeah, no, on this... I just think that probably an on-the-day ballot would be a useful addition, at least in the same style as a national election. Because come on. And people should have time off to go to it. And we should encourage that, and, I mean, that would probably increase things overall. And I think that Labour has recently announced that they're going to have ballot boxes on the day at — hmm — Countdowns and Pak'nSaves and that. That would probably help a lot as well. You could enrol to vote after doing your shop and cast a special vote.

OSCAR: I think the council has... They're doing lots of things, but they've got these things called one-stop shops, where if you miss enrolment, which is tomorrow, in order to get your postal papers, you can still enrol on the day and vote straight away, and they're going to be at places like the night markets or the malls or places where the community gathers. So it's not from a lack of trying, I feel. Here's an interesting question. I guess it's kind of been part of the national discussion as well, but it's just an interesting question to think about. Prisoners voting. - Ooh. Marina made a face.

- LAURA: Yes.

- OSCAR: Laura?

- LAURA: I mean, yes, obviously they should vote. And also we should abolish prisons. - (laughter) - I know one's less— You know, it's that thing where you propose a much more radical idea to make that one seem far less radical. But we should, by 2040, abolish prisons. I mean, it's been found to be— It goes against human rights. It's found to be unconstitutional. And the Waitangi Tribunal report found that it is a breach of the Treaty, and so, to me, it seems like a no-brainer. And I'm assuming that the reason that Jacinda has come out with the position that she's come out with is because of New Zealand First and their desire to keep the law-and-order votes. And I just wish there was a bit of honesty in the coalition about that, because it's so obvious that that's the reason why, and I just wish she was like, "You know, I really support this, but Winnie's holding me back." And I just feel that would be a much more authentic statement than what has been said, and I find that frustrating.

KARL: I think it follows the restorative justice approach. We claim to be a restorative justice nation, and if we're going to want someone to feel that their job— The job of being in prison? Their role. You know, their side of the bargain of being in prison is to leave ready to re engage with society. It's to engage as citizens. So to have this arbitrary disconnection from civic life and civic society, I don't know, it doesn't make sense to me. It would be worse to make them read books about local body politics.

(laughter)

OSCAR: Just make them all read Spinoff.

- HAYDEN: Give them my section.

- MICHAEL: "Give them my section!"

OSCAR: Make them read Hayden's section of Spinoff. Yeah, it does seem a bit odd, that one. And going back to something you said earlier, Laura, our low participation rate — is that a symptom? And rather than treating the symptoms...

LAURA: I mean, yeah. Prison is an example of us treating the symptoms. Over 90% of the people that we lock in prisons have a mental health, distress, or addiction issue. I think it's 64% of people have had some kind of traumatic brain injury compared to just 2% of the general population. And so prison is our failure to adequately fund mental health, and so we just sort of put them there and lock them away, and then be like, "And by the way, you can't vote." And so I think we have this tendency to just be like, "Oh, we should just put the voting online, and that will fix it" and not actually delve into the complexity of things and to focus on early intervention and prevention instead of punishment and, you know, closing the gap in wealth in our country and acknowledging the deep harms that have been done by colonisation and working on a path towards intergenerational healing, collectively. Yeah, sorry, I'm always bringing it real down, eh? (laughs) - Hayden, say something funny. - (laughter) But, yeah, we tend to treat symptoms and not root causes, and I think as long as we keep going with that approach, we will continue to have the same problems over and over again.

OSCAR: I've got a... It's not really a question. Someone said, "It's great that young people participate directly, "but if they don't vote, they let the old conservatives control the agenda." I feel like, you know, some of my good mates are older white guys, and in terms of... We can't punish the people that do vote or that do turn up, but let's say we don't get the ideal world and we don't get the quality of candidates that's fully representative of our city. What can...? That's not what this is about, but what can those councillors do to actually engage with the community voices that aren't being represented, perhaps, as fully on council. Not that that's our job — to tell councillors how to reach their people.

HAYDEN: I think, partly, maybe this goes back a little bit to what you were talking about with young people with direct democracy. I just want to— As an aside, I find it quite funny that there's more people engaged in direct democracy now because I always think the teenagers in 1968 became the boomers of today, and I'm like, "Ooh, there's a disconnect there." I'm like, now it makes sense. But when you see Generation Zero sort of engaging people on SkyPath or something, you get this massive feedback that actually did make a difference to councillors. That was actually the figure. - I knew that.

- OSCAR: 11,115.

- HAYDEN: Yeah.

- OSCAR: Against 130 "no"s.

HAYDEN: So it was 11,000-100 in terms of the submissions in favour of SkyPath, and those people — most of those 11,000 people that submitted — probably didn't vote, statistically, but the sheer overwhelming support for that probably did sway Council in a lot of ways, and so there probably is that opportunity, even post-the election, to influence things if that direct democracy is employed correctly.

LAURA: And in terms of what councillors can do when that happens... I used to be a member of Generation Zero Auckland, and I remember some of my friends went for their first ever submission to Auckland Council and got yelled at. And there was this video that went viral. "You young people don't know what you're talking about." It wasn't by the crowd; it was by (laughs) councillors who disagreed with them. Yeah, so that's one thing — if you get in and then young people come to engage in the processes, don't yell at them. But also I think the role of civil society organisations like Generation Zero is really important. That's where I come back to this idea of— The struggle for civil society organisations — because I run one and co-founded one — is funding, and so that's where I think, again, the youth participation, Access Funding Bill, or something similar, would really help as a structural solution to help get these groups the funding that they have so they can be sort of a bridge between citizens and the institutions that represent citizens because, yeah, I think those bridges are really, really important, but they're doing it on the side of a uni degree whilst also a part-time job while also trying to have some kind of social life, and what ends up happening is you just mix your social life with your activism, and that's cool, but it is also nice to not have to necessarily stress to pay the rent and all those sorts of things. MARINA: One of the things that I was thinking of was my step-daughter, she goes to school down in Lower Hutt in Wellington, and her local MP — at that time, it was Trevor Mallard — came to her school, and she didn't know who he was. He talked, stood around for photos, and then left, and then the class just were interested to find out more about what he was and what he did and all that sort of thing. And I feel like it's so cliché, having worked in a minister's office before, but just if politicians — either central or local politicians — if they go to

their schools... And this is also my dig about civics education. If they go to schools and meet the school students, then that will excite them. That will interest them in the political process and what a politician does and about why it's important to vote. But I just feel that there are a lot of schools. Well, there's over 2000 secondary schools in New Zealand, so that's a lot of eating sausage rolls and drinking cups of tea.

OSCAR: "Do you think we should lower the age to 16?" has just come through on the slider.

HAYDEN: Yes.

OSCAR: Why? Who said yes? Was that you, Hayden?

- HAYDEN: I thought I was saying it with everyone else.

- (laughter)

KARL: I think yes but with the caveat of civics education in schools. I'm happy for a 16-year-old to drive on the caveat that they are trained to drive. So I think it's tied in one or the other. Without civics education in schools and without that supporting infrastructure around it, I'm a bit more tentative, but hey.

HAYDEN: I think of it in the same way I think about the disenfranchisement of prisoners in a sense that we should find reasons... There should be really good reasons to disenfranchise someone, and our first option should always be to enfranchise them, not to disenfranchise someone. And 16-year-olds... I mean, Lorde was 16 when she wrote Royals, so.

- (laughter) - I mean, they're not dumb.

KARL: The logic around the developing brain and they're too young and they can't make good choices, unfortunately, if you put the other end of the life spectrum, - you can apply much of that to...

- (laughter)

So, you know, touche.

HAYDEN: I would never say something like that.

LAURA: Also in Scotland, when they had the referendum about whether or not Scotland should leave the UK, they lowered the voting age to 16 for it, and the turnout of 16- to 17-year-olds was 75%, which is pretty awesome, so, yeah, I think that's a pretty good reason to do it.

KARL: My area of expertise is this little bit — if you cast a vote the first time you're given the opportunity to, a significant vote like a general election or a local body election, your children are likely to vote. If you don't cast that vote, such as the intergenerational patterns, you're more likely to not—

OSCAR: So parents can actually be quite influential.

KARL: And vice versa. Young people can also be very influential on their parents as well. So if they start to engage, you can break the cycle in both directions. But it's a really interesting thing that once I engage — I've cast that vote — I want to see how well the person I've voted for performs, so I've got a horse in the race. If the person I vote for doesn't get elected, I've got a reason to be watching what's going on. But I'm engaged. Therefore, I'm more likely to talk about it. Therefore, my whanau are more likely to hear politics and civic discourse as normalised. Therefore, they're more likely to pay attention and you get this lovely spiral of participation. -

OSCAR: Culture change.

- KARL: Absolute culture change. Look, I'm looking forward to be a middle-aged Pakeha white man.

- HAYDEN: "Looking forward"?

- (laughter)

KARL: Can I?

OSCAR: Hey, just because we've got about five minutes left before Marguerite comes on to summarise, I'm going to give you each a chance to have one last statement about this conversation, but before I do, an interesting thing has just come in. Not everyone is motivated by doing the right thing or the fact that it's really good for us and our society. Some people are motivated by money. Do you think salary? Do you think that could be a part of enticing people to run for...? Ooh, Michael, you're like...

HAYDEN: You're literally the only one that's done it.

MICHAEL: It's so tricky. Dunno. I took a big pay cut to go and run for... for local body politics, which I know is a very privileged position to be in. I think it's set about right, honestly. I think... I come back to I think people think council — particularly council — is a lot more daunting. I remember working with the Youth Advisory Panel, and they kind of thought they needed to go through the motions before they might one day run for a local body, like for a local board or something. It's like, nah, man, just jump straight in.

OSCAR: We don't necessarily want people who are only going to do it for the money. Is that what you're saying?

MICHAEL: Yeah. Yeah. Yup. But then, on the other scale, I think there's people worth three times as much on the local boards or on the councils than they are in the private sector too, so it works at both ends. I honestly feel like sometimes we could be sitting about right, because those people that probably are more vulnerable, not in the high... For them, it should be incentivising, and they can study. It's quite an agile job. Like, you can make it work for you and your other governors. And would I like to see better quality decision-making? Yes. But does that necessarily come from a higher echelon of earners? No. So I kind of feel like it's set about right, yeah.

OSCAR: Awesome. Closing statements — who'd like to kick us off? Hayden.

HAYDEN: No, go Laura.

- MARINA: I will.

- OSCAR: Yes, please.

MARINA: I just wanted to say that from a Superdiverse perspective, it's quite important to be able to get super diverse people enrolled because that's the biggest hurdle to them not voting. We've got a group that's called New Zealand Asian Leaders, and it's a whole bunch of Asian leaders from New Zealand who met with Auckland Council this week, and they said that the majority of the issues with their communities is that nobody knows how to enrol, because if you're not enrolled, you can't vote, so I just think we need to go back to that step of saying, "Enrol, then vote," and what next?

OSCAR: Thank you. Karl?

KARL: I think we need to practise a kinder, more open and deliberative democracy, and I think we need to model better behaviour on every level — media, education. I think we need to do better, and we need to bring it back in terms of our national kaupapa, that this is an important thing we need to foreground. I think we need to have those arguments about whether the council sees me as a customer or a citizen. I want to be a citizen, not a customer, and that changes my relationship. I think we need to have a good, long, hard look. And New Zealand's good; we have these little crux moments. We had awful ones in Christchurch recently, and it gives us the opportunity to take a good, long, hard look at ourselves and what we want, and I'm looking forward to the moment we do that with civics and with citizenship and find that within our national discourse that we make that space to have these really hard conversations and push things forward. One little thing I want to add is just we talk a lot about ethnic groups and age and location, but increasingly how big data is thinking about us is in terms of psychographics, in

terms of mindsets, and if you drill down in the voter of nonparticipation, we get things like apartment dwellers and Pakeha tradies, and we get these little pockets of nonparticipation that are really interesting, and I think about that dense, urban future Auckland City where more and more people are going to live in apartments. Apartment dwellers don't vote. It's because they don't have neighbours or feel part of a community. There's lots of reasons why they don't vote. It's a mindset of disconnection, so I'd be really wary about just focusing on these really easy, observable demographic identifiers and think about psychographics and who we're leaving behind psychologically, psychographically.

OSCAR: Thank you. Michael?

MICHAEL: It's a really complex environment. I think there's... I reckon an interesting exercise— Because we're in a room full of voters, bar four people, it would have been a really interesting exercise of getting them up here and just asking them questions for an hour and a half of why they don't. I think the onus isn't on council. It's not on government. I think there's a real responsibility on us to put all our bullshit aside and understand that participation and involvement is better for representation and civic serving and all the things that we're probably a little bit wired towards. And I think we've got a large responsibility. As I say, I don't mind which way you're voting or where you are; I want to know about your intent, your values. You might not represent my community, but I think you need to be around that decision-making table. I'd sort of, particularly for the audience... It's not about trying to get non-voters to vote, but I think it's more about getting voting people to encourage voting, and I think that's probably my last message, eh? You always hear about "How do we get non-voters to vote?" I think we play a far larger part in influencing other people to vote than thinking about council, government, and all that. That's probably the last thing.

HAYDEN: I just want to say that local government is cool. (laughter) And it is interesting. And it is not boring. Please stop telling me that. You know. It is, though! We're so beaten down about local government. (groaning) "Oh my God, I voted in the council election." "Oh, have you thought about it?" It's actually quite interesting, and the people who participate in it are mostly kinda crazy, and the barriers to entry are so low that you get a really interesting mix... (loud laughter) ...of people... (chuckles) involved in it. I just want to preach to... I just want to be an advocate for local government being an actually interesting thing to write about and study, and maybe, hopefully, one day there will be a story on The Spinoff or something that will reflect that. Yeah. There's also a lot of intractable social issues and different things that we've covered about why young people don't vote, and I endorse all those as well while I'm saying this stupid stuff.

OSCAR: Thank you, Hayden. Laura?

LAURA: I'm going to try and bring it back to what I started off with, which is one of the complex reasons, and I'm going to focus on Maori. One of the complex reasons that Maori don't vote, as I've said, is because of intergenerational distrust of the Crown because of our colonial history

and present. Right now in Auckland we have a peaceful occupation or resistance happening in Ihumatao. One of the reasons that that situation exists now is because land that was confiscated in 1863, when it became available for sale 100 and something years later, rather than the Crown buying it back to gift it back to the Maori from whom it was taken, gave it to Auckland Council, and then Auckland Council made that area a special housing area, which Auckland Council, to their credit, has recently expressed regret for that decision. My wero, my challenge, to you all is to read the history of Ihumatao, to visit the land if you can or if you haven't already, and to recognise that the Treaty relationship is not just between the Crown and Maori, but it's between Pakeha and Maori or tauiwi — non-Maori — and Maori and that we all have an obligation to learn about the Treaty, honour the Treaty, and try and live as best we can in relationship with tangata whenua.

OSCAR: Thank you. Just a question before I close this session. The people that haven't voted, can I get your hands up? The stuff you've heard tonight — does that make you want to vote this time round? (indistinct responses) - (laughter)

- HAYDEN: It was all worthwhile.

OSCAR: Awesome.

HAYDEN: We did it, guys! Let's go home.

- OSCAR: What was your answer? - (indistinct response) Cool. Ladies and gentlemen, please show some love for our panellists tonight — Laura O'Connell Rapira, Karl Kane, Marina Matthews, Michael Goudie, and Hayden Donnell. Thank you to everyone. Thank you to everyone that put a question through and for listening. And now I'd like to invite up— For the last five minutes and 39 seconds, I'd like to ask the general manager of Democracy Services at Auckland Council, Marguerite Delbet, to provide the vote of thanks. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

(applause)

MARGUERITE: Kia ora. Good evening. I've got the fantastic title of General Manager of Democracy Services, and that means that my responsibility is to ensure we deliver a free-fare election for the local body in Auckland next month. So I just want to very quickly — no, not quickly, actually. Taking time to acknowledge my team, my elections team, who is here tonight, who is working very, very hard to make sure that we deliver a successful election. That's the first thing. The second thing I wanted to cover is make a couple of comments about what the panel has said and maybe sort of shed some light on some of the work that we've done recently. First, at a fundamental level, I will give my first word and last word to you, Karl. You said something that is very, very important to me and very dear to my heart, which is that voting is a privilege, and actually having access to democracy is a privilege that very few of us in the world have.

And actually, that is why it makes it a duty to vote, and if we don't exercise that vote and we lose it one day, we'll probably regret not having fought for it, so that's the very first thing I wanted to say. The second thing is you all talked about the reasons why people are not voting, and I think the panel made it very clear that — and we know this from research — that there is no silver bullet to address the decline in voter participation. It's happening all around the world, so we're not unique in having that challenge, and there is a lot of work being done all around the world to try and address that decline. Some of the things that have been talked about I thought I would comment on very quickly. The first one about compulsory voting. So two things. We did run a survey recently — and this is, to my knowledge, the first time we were asking the question to Auckland voters — about whether they would support compulsory voting. We just wanted to take a little bit of a poll of the Auckland population and see what they would tell us. And we were very surprised to find out that a majority of people — so overall 52% of people — supported compulsory voting. 35% were opposed, and 12% didn't know. But actually the proportion of 25- to 34-year-old people who were for compulsory voting was twice as much as those who were not. So despite the fact that young people are not voting in as big numbers, they were actually supporting compulsory voting. So that was kind of interesting. Just putting that in parallel with an important point that Laura made, compulsory voting in itself— Research has showed us that compulsory voting in itself does not increase voter participation. It is only if you give people the information and the education of why it's important to vote that they will exercise that vote. And the research is quite clear there, so if we wanted to go there, we would need to do all the education. "So why not do the education anyway?" is another point. On lowering the voting age — this was the same survey — we had a large majority of Aucklanders who told us that they were against it. And so just explaining to people why it would be a good idea comes back, again, to just equipping people to be able to vote, to have the knowledge and information to do that. So that leads me to talk a little bit about our Youth Voting programme. This is a programme that Auckland Council has been running since the 2010 elections when the Auckland Council was created, but that programme existed before in the legacy councils, and it is run elsewhere in New Zealand. But we are very active, and, again, I just really want to pay tribute to some amazing people in my team and at the Council who are very, very passionate about it. Basically, the Youth Voting programme is developing a curriculum of that civic participation, of that civics education, that we are taking to the schools in Auckland to really teach young people to vote. And there was a question on Slido about "What do we do about voter participation between the elections?" And that's a question we've asked ourselves at Auckland Council. Just trying to explain to people why it's important to vote once every three years is not turning people into long-term voters, which has been explained by the panel — how important it is to vote the first time. If you vote the first time, you will continue to vote afterwards. So we've got more than 60 schools that are enrolled to take part into our Youth Voting programme, and for the first time, this time around, some of our schools are actually organising candidate evenings where they are going to invite the candidates. Students are actually going to ask the candidates why they are standing and why it's important to vote and what they are actually standing for. A Manurewa school is running a mayoral debate, so I really encourage you to have a look at our website about the Youth Voting programme, and that's our attempt to try and invite people to participate

from a young age. I will just touch very quickly on online voting. We fought very hard for the introduction of legislation that would enable online voting, and this happened last year. That legislation doesn't make online voting possible; it makes the trial of online voting possible. And in the case of Auckland, we wouldn't be able to trial online voting for the whole population because it was considered that Auckland was too big to fail, so we could only have trial online voting for a certain part of Auckland. We — and when I say "we", Auckland Council with some other councils, so there were nine councils — fought very hard to try and get a trial together. The plug got pulled at the last minute because the total bill was just too high for some of the smaller councils which were going to participate, which was sort of a crushing disappointment in terms of really trying to advance the cause. Now, I just really want to reiterate the point that I think you made, Laura — online voting is not the panacea to voter participation. We know that it will only increase voter participation marginally. But it will do two things. The first one is we do need to find a way to address the decline in our postal system. Beyond 2025, we cannot reliably say that we will be able to run a postal election only through postal voting, so if we have to do a trial before we actually adopt online voting, well, we'd better get on with it pretty damn quickly. That's the first thing. The second thing — the point that you made, Marina — there's some really interesting research that was done recently in Canada around the impact of online voting in local elections in Canada, and it was found to increase voter participation slightly but also to increase that social divide that comes from access to the internet. And, Karl, you talked about it. We saw it with the census. So it's really important to see online voting as one way to make voting easier for people but certainly not the silver bullet that will solve it all. Now, I'm very much out of time, so I thought I would just give you those facts. There was a question on Slido about why the community of Parnell is actually changing wards. To the person who asked that question, I'm very happy to talk to you about it afterwards. This is all about representation, and as part of democracy, one of the things that we need to do is to ensure that an equal number of voters get represented by their elected representatives. And what we are seeing in Auckland which is posing some really interesting challenges is the huge growth of the central city means that a lot of the population growth is there, and how do we make sure, simply in terms of numbers, that these people are fairly represented in an equal way compared to the rest of Auckland. So that's what it's about, and I'm happy to give you the much more nerdy answer to the question outside. So, Oscar mentioned that nominations are closing at 12 o'clock tomorrow. You still have time to decide to run for council until 12 o'clock tomorrow. Just make sure that you put in your nomination on time. And if you're not enrolled to vote, for those of you who haven't voted before, the Electoral Commission is outside, and you can enrol tonight, so just do it. And otherwise— (laughs) And otherwise, you will continue to be able— Even if the rolls close, you will continue to be able to enrol and cast a special vote for the local election, so don't think that it's too late. You can get involved until the very last minute. In terms of next steps, your voting papers will start being delivered in your letterboxes from the 20th of September, and the last day to vote is 12 o'clock on the 8th of October. Sorry, the 12th of October — 12 o'clock on Saturday, the 12th of October — so make sure that you return your ballot paper on time. You are able to return it through, obviously, the mail, but we will also have voting boxes in service centres in our libraries, so make the most use of it. Just a reminder that voteauckland.co.nz is our website,

and as soon as we've got the final list of candidates, which will be tomorrow, Friday, after 5 o'clock, from next week, you will have the profiles of candidates online, so you'll be able to learn a little bit more about who is standing, and there's a lot more information on where to vote and how to vote there as well, so voteauckland.co.nz is the place to go. To finish, I really want to thank you, Oscar, for facilitating this session tonight, so very big thank-you to you. A big thank-you, again, to our panel for your very thought-provoking comments. And a big thank-you, again, to our sponsors for making Auckland Conversations possible. Our next Auckland Conversations will be announced very soon, so please stay tuned and have a look on our website. It will be towards the end of September. We keep it secret, like your vote, but we'll tell you all about it very soon. Thank you very much to all of you who were here tonight, and thank you very much to all of you who were watching us online. Wishing you a very good evening.