



**04 DEC 2018**

Raymond Huo MP  
Chair, Justice Committee  
Parliament Buildings

Dear Raymond

## **Amendments to the Electoral Act 1993**

This is to advise you that I am considering proposing an Electoral Amendment Bill be included on the Government's 2019 legislative programme. This Bill would progress minor or technical amendments to electoral law, for example to help manage the logistical requirements of general elections by making voting, and voting places, more accessible.

I have asked officials for advice on some areas that could be included in a Bill, with a focus on the key legislative priorities identified by the Electoral Commission in its Report to Parliament on the 2017 general election. These include the following.

*Removing the prohibition on designating a licensed premise selling alcohol as a polling place.*

- This would allow the Electoral Commission to designate supermarkets, malls, sports clubs and similar high-traffic areas as polling places.

*Enabling ballots to be counted away from the polling place.*

- Removing the requirement for a preliminary count to take place on polling day at the polling place would increase the number of venues that can be used as polling places. This is because not all polling places would need to have sufficient spaces to allow for the counting as well as the casting of votes. It would also enable places such as supermarkets and malls (which do not have suitable private spaces for counting) to be used as polling places for both advanced voting and on polling day, providing better continuity of places used for voting over the full voting period.

*Enabling the special vote declaration to be able to be treated as an application to enrol or update enrolment details.*

- This would reduce the number of forms that a person must complete, and so ease congestion in voting places.

I have also asked my officials to look at enrolment on election day, and whether this could be made available for the 2020 election.

## **Amendments to the Electoral Regulations 1996**

I am also considering making some small amendments to the Electoral Regulations. These changes were recommended in the Electoral Commission's Report to Parliament on the 2017 general election.

*Specifying a deadline for postal vote applications, extending the current deadline for the return of overseas postal votes and centralising the processing of overseas vote.*

- These changes would improve the likelihood of overseas votes being received in time to be included in the count.

*Enabling remote voting services to be provided to electors who cannot access voting services.*

- This would enfranchise voters who may struggle to get to a voting place because of a disability or on account of their remote location, or due to a civil emergency.

### **Timing**

In order for any changes to the Electoral Act or the Electoral Regulations to be implemented for the 2020 election, they would need to be made by the end of 2019. For this reason, I would need to develop these changes alongside, rather than after, your Committee's Inquiry into the 2017 general election. If there is a Bill, and depending on the progress of your Inquiry, there may be an opportunity to add some of your recommended legislative changes during the Parliamentary process.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Andrew Little  
**Minister of Justice**