

## **Attachment C: QLDC Submission**

### **Submission to the Select Committee – 28 July 2016**

#### **Better Local Service Reforms**

Submission of the Queenstown Lakes District Council on the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (No.2) 2016

#### **Introduction**

The Queenstown Lakes District Council would like to submit on the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (No.2) 2016 (the Bill).

In general this Council considers that the intent of the Bill aligns with the principles with which QLDC functions to fulfil the purpose on local government as prescribed by the Act. This Council and our fellow Otago Councils have embraced the Section 17A Review in good faith and are collaboratively working towards achieving efficiencies, despite our geographical and economic diversity.

As stated we support the intent of the Cabinet Paper but have a genuine concern that the Bill as outlined has the potential to diminish local democracy through the proposed powers prescribed. Further, as a District Council, we have strong concern with the potential that Elected Members could potentially lose direct control over the majority of QLDC's annual expenditure.

#### **Comment**

The Council endorses the submissions of both the LGNZ and SOLGM. In particular we share the key concern highlighted by both submissions that the Bill does not enable a poll where the Commission proposes a CCO.

In short the intent of the Bill is accepted but the instrument of change appears too blunt and too fiscally focussed. This Council has had considerable experience in establishing and disestablishing CCO's, although we acknowledge that the focus of this legislation is not the same. In our experience the model proved deeply frustrating for council, boards and the community.

We further submit that the essence of local government is to respond at a local level to the desire to affect change. Both the legislation and the potential in our case to have a potentially metro-centric organisation based several hundred kilometres from our district, administering a significant portion of the rate take, remotely, could be a potential threat to local democracy. In particular we question the Bill's intention to deny Elected Members the right to sit on CCO boards to ensure first hand that local priorities are being met.

It may be sufficient for the powers as outlined to be invoked when certain criteria is not being met, for example where debt parameters are being exceeded or where a Council is failing to review and implement shared services, where a review indicates a positive and beneficial change.

## **Conclusion**

The Queenstown Lakes District Council supports the intent of the reform and considers it has been making positive progress towards efficiency as prescribed by the Act. However we hold serious concerns that the Bill as it currently stands has potential to erode local democracy and appears to overlook existing good governance in local government. Our impression is that this legislation has been rushed. We recommend the Bill is reviewed to enable a collaborative approach with local government to reach a more acceptable solution for local communities.