



13 February 2025

Chair
Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Chair

Crimes Legislation (Stalking and Harassment) Amendment Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on this legislation.

LGNZ strongly supports this legislation, including the introduction of a new stalking and harassment offence and other measures to reduce the harm that victims experience while also ensuring that offenders are effectively prosecuted.

It is essential to functioning democracy that elected members can carry out their roles without harassment and abuse – but local government elected members are experiencing increased abuse, both online and in person. As well as causing harm to individuals, this behaviour has a more general chilling effect on decisions to stand for public office.

In our 2022 survey of elected members, 43% had experienced harassment, prejudice, threatening or derogatory behaviours in their role. Half of these had experienced harassment while working in the community.

In 2024, when we polled Mayors, Chairs and CEs attending an LGNZ event, nearly two thirds had faced aggressive and abusive behaviour online. Nearly three quarters (74%) had experienced this behaviour during public, in-person meetings. A third of respondents said abuse and aggression happened during everyday activities like shopping or collecting children from school – and 39% said it happened at community events. Furthermore, 53% said the aggressive, abusive or offensive behaviour was worse than a year ago.

While all elected members are experiencing an increased in abuse and harassment, women are particularly at risk. Women elected members in New Zealand are significantly more likely than their male colleagues to experience gendered abuse, sexualized comments, threats to their family, and threats of sexual violence¹.

Aggressive and abusive behaviours can constitute stalking or be a precursor to it. The new 216P (1)(b)(ii) in the Crimes Act (cl 4 of the bill) is important as stalking and harassment of elected members may involve emailing/calling/turning up at council offices or other venues. We know anecdotally that Mayors

¹ Shannon Zhan, “From Harm to Harassment: Understanding and Combatting Online Gender Based Violence” (2024)



and Chief Executives have been approached at home during evenings or weekends, particularly by anti-government extremists, and that elected members have had family members followed home.

We are thoughtful about the broadness of the new 216Q (2), given that a lot of the harassment/stalking of elected members comes from members of the public who are absolutely convinced that they are doing it in the public interest.

LGNZ absolutely agrees New Zealand needs more levers to control stalking and its precursor behaviours, which is why we support this legislation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SB', written over a horizontal line.

Sam Broughton
President
Local Government New Zealand