



Policy Remit 2026

Submitted by group:	Pōneke Wellington Local Organising Group
Contact Person:	Grant Brookes, Chairperson
Policy Title:	NZNO Position on the 2026 General Election

Recommendation

THAT NZNO supports a change of government at the 2026 General Election

Rationale

Remember other groups reviewing your proposal do not have the benefit of the discussion which took place within your group. Please ensure the rationale clearly explains the reason for, and what is intended to be achieved by, the proposed amendment.

Health is political. The conditions under which NZNO members work, and under which patients and whānau are able to stay healthy or engage with the health system, are shaped by elected decision-makers at all levels, from Cabinet down to local government.

This has long been the case. Social determinants of health such as income levels, access to education and housing are the subject of political decisions. Budgets and funding models for the public health system, aged care, primary health and for Māori and Iwi providers are decided by Government MPs, who also influence access criteria for private healthcare funded through ACC.

This is why at each general election, NZNO adopts a position and publishes guidance for voters. Such “political activism” is now enshrined in NZNO’s Mission statement in our new Constitution.

Traditionally, NZNO’s position at election time has taken the form of a manifesto, or set of policy priorities. The published guidance for voters has then compared party policies against NZNO’s position. Examples from the last two decades are available in the footnotes.¹ This year, the Joint Hui of the NZNO National Executive and Te Poari have decided that the central foundation of NZNO’s position will be the five policy points in the Buller Declaration, the 90,000 strong petition from Patient Voice Aotearoa.²

But over the last three years, the Coalition has not only implemented a policy programme harmful to NZNO members, patients and whānau. It has rewritten long-standing norms of government, demonstrating an unparalleled degree of direct political intervention in health sector bargaining,

professional regulation and healthcare delivery. The Health Minister urged Te Whatu Ora to apply to the Employment Relations Authority to terminate collective bargaining for our senior medical and dental colleagues.³ His intervention breached employment law.⁴ He is currently proposing to change the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, to give himself the power to direct the Nursing Council.⁵

The ACT Party publicly attacked the Nursing Council for upholding cultural safety,⁶ and wants to ban Te Whatu Ora staff from using karakia.⁷ The NZ First Associate Health Minister even issued instructions for how staff should speak about pregnancy.⁸ Six Ministers spent just 45 minutes deciding in a secret, unminuted meeting to cancel pay equity for 180,000 workers in health and social services.⁹ Such direct and cursory interference by government politicians is unprecedented.

In response to the new reality, the Pōneke Wellington Local Organising Group believes that NZNO needs to strengthen its guidance for voters at the 2026 General Election. Our Constitution bars NZNO from affiliating to a political party but does not prevent NZNO calling explicitly for change, in addition to its other planned communications.

Last year, NZNO joined other unions in events organised by the NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi to “Fight Back Together”. Our collective stand declared, “This is the most anti-worker government that we’ve seen in decades, attacking our rights day after day and trying to divide us.”

“Attacks on working people come on top of the relentless and ongoing attacks on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori rights. The coalition is trying to divide us and are sowing the seeds of division.”¹⁰

We believe that NZNO members should be able to democratically decide whether to strengthen our union’s response to the most anti-worker government in decades, in line with NZNO’s strategic aims and our commitment to bicultural partnership based on the articles of te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is why we are submitting this policy remit, which all members are able to vote on, that NZNO supports a change of government at the 2026 General Election.

Potential Consequences (including cost)

Please consider and outline the intended and unintended consequences of the proposed policy, as well as the financial impact of the proposed remit – refer to clause 17.4 of the NZNO Constitution for detail of what the Remit Committee will be considering

Potential consequences of the proposed policy include increased discussion and debate among NZNO members over voting at the 2026 General Election. This creates both risks and benefits. A risk could be increased dissatisfaction among NZNO members who do not agree with the majority decision made about the remit. This is similar to the risk created by other democratic decisions made by ballots of NZNO members, such decisions to ratify collective agreements. These risks are successfully managed. A benefit of increased discussion and debate over voting at the 2026 General Election could be increased political awareness and voter turnout among NZNO members. There are no financial impacts of this proposed remit.

The timeframe for achieving this policy change would be as follows:

- 22 July: Last possible date for copies of this policy remit to be sent to AGM delegates

This remit must be submitted to Conference@nzno.org.nz before 4pm, Friday 15 May 2026

- 13 August: Hui ā-Tau receives this policy remit, the Remit Committee report and makes recommendations, for or against the remit
- 22-24 September: AGM receives this policy remit, the Remit Committee report and makes recommendations, for or against the remit
- 25 September: Earliest possible date for the NZNO Chief Executive to open the voting on this policy remit, through all-member ballot
- 15 October: Last possible date for the NZNO Chief Executive to open the voting on this policy remit, through all-member ballot
- 25 October: Earliest possible date for the NZNO Chief Executive to announce the result of voting on this policy remit
- 7 November: General Election
- 21 November: Last possible date for the NZNO Chief Executive to announce the result of voting on this policy remit.

A timeframe which would work to achieve this change in NZNO's guidance for voters at the 2026 General Election is therefore achievable, should the NZNO Chief Executive so decide.

¹ NZNO Election Materials, <https://tinyurl.com/NZNO-Election-Materials>

² Patient Voice Aotearoa, <https://www.patientvoice.nz>

³ Binding arbitration sought to resolve senior doctors' dispute, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/binding-arbitration-sought-resolve-senior-doctors-dispute>

⁴ Minister's Intervention In ASMS' Bargaining Unlawful – Union Says, <https://asms.org.nz/ministers-intervention-in-asms-bargaining-unlawful-union-says/>

⁵ Modernising the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, <https://www.health.govt.nz/regulation-legislation/health-practitioners/modernising-the-act>

⁶ ACT should leave nursing to professionals and medical evidence, https://www.nzno.org.nz/about_us/media_releases/artmid/4731/articleid/6980/act-should-leave-nursing-to-professionals-and-medical-evidence

⁷ Act Party wants Te Whatu Ora staff to ditch karakia, <https://archive.is/m6717>

⁸ Coalition directs Health NZ to stop saying 'pregnant people', <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/558168/coalition-directs-health-nz-to-stop-saying-pregnant-people>

⁹ How a crucial 45-minute meeting between ministers took pay equity claims away from tens of thousands of women. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/590100/how-a-crucial-45-minute-meeting-between-ministers-took-pay-equity-claims-away-from-tens-of-thousands-of-women>

¹⁰ Fight Back Together Maranga Ake, https://www.together.org.nz/may_day_hui