

Lobbying from Within:

A sequential explanatory mixed methods analysis
of Local Government New Zealand's Influence
on National Policies

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Abstract

This thesis examines the policy influence of Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), a local government association (LGA), within the formal legislative process. Influence is measured through lobbying success, defined as the alignment between LGNZ's parliamentary submissions and final legislation at the policy-issue level. By focusing on how an LGA lobbies to shape national policy outcomes, this thesis contributes to the understanding of a largely overlooked area in the interest group literature.

Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design, this thesis quantitatively analysed 453 policy issues across 37 randomly selected pieces of legislation to assess the extent of LGNZ's lobbying success and to identify associated institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors. A subsequent qualitative case study of the Local Government Act Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2016 contextualised and explained statistical relationships by examining how these factors operated within a specific legislative setting.

The quantitative findings indicated that LGNZ had a moderate capacity to advance its policy preferences in final legislation, achieving favourable outcomes in half of all policy issues, a similar rate for technical amendments, and one-third for substantive changes to government policy intent. LGNZ's success was associated with centre-right governments; agreement with LGNZ's position by government officials, select committees, and coalition or support parties; strong council support; and LGNZ testifying before select committees, seeking technical over substantive policy changes, and using supporting evidence. The case study broadly confirmed and extended statistical relationships, illustrating how LGNZ navigated the political landscape through a combination of insider and outsider lobbying tactics. However, the case study reframed the statistical link between governing party and success, suggesting that it was better explained by consultation timing or policy alignment than partisan ideology.

This thesis sheds light on LGNZ's policy influence and offers insights into how other LGAs may enhance their advocacy within formal legislative processes. It advances the literature by demonstrating that an LGA can successfully employ outsider lobbying tactics despite being largely seen as an insider lobbyist, and that influence may arise from an interaction of factors rather than in isolation, as previous studies have largely considered.

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Abbreviations

CAA	Catchment Authorities Association
CCO	Council Controlled Organisation
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CLGF	Central and Local Government Forum
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DIA	Department of Internal Affairs
DPMC	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
ETS	Emission Trading Scheme
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FPP	First Past the Post electoral system
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HUD	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
LAC	Legislation Advisory Committee
LGA	Local Government Association
LGA02	Local Government Act 2002
LGC	Local Government Commission
LGNZ	Local Government New Zealand
LTP	Long-Term Plan
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MANZ	Municipal Association of New Zealand
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MCH	Ministry for Culture and Heritage
MfE	Ministry for the Environment
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional electoral system
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoT	Ministry of Transport
MP	Member of Parliament
MPI	Ministry for Primary Industries
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NZCA	New Zealand Counties Association
OIA	Official Information Act 1982
PCO	Parliamentary Counsel Office
PSC	Public Service Commission
RMA	Resource Management Act 1991
SOLGM	Society of Local Government Managers
SOP	Supplementary Order Paper
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TDC	Timaru District Council
VNG	Association of Netherlands Municipalities
YEM	Young Elected Members

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Segfrey D. Gonzales

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When local governments lobby

Local authorities are all too frequently seen as the agents of central departments, implementing services to national standards within national guidelines. But local government is an actor on the national stage: its national representatives live in the village that is Westminster and Whitehall, meeting with ministers and civil servants on a virtually routinised basis.

Rod A. W. Rhodes, *The National World of Local Government* (1986, p. 1)

1.1 Introduction

Local authorities are often characterised as agents of central government, implementing nationally determined policies within tightly prescribed regulatory frameworks. This portrayal that extends to the New Zealand context. However, drawing on Rhodes's (1986) analysis of central–local policy networks in the United Kingdom, local government can also be a significant actor in national policymaking. Local authority representatives routinely engage with ministers and senior civil servants through established and ongoing policy relationships, rather than functioning solely as passive implementers of central government decisions.

Local government associations (LGAs), as collective representatives of local authorities, are underexamined within the interest group literature. Existing research has tended to prioritise private-sector actors, such as businesses and trade unions, with comparatively little attention paid to the lobbying activities and policy influence of public-sector groups. This omission produces an incomplete account of interest group politics, as local governments also compete for political attention and seek to shape policy outcomes in pursuit of their statutory responsibilities.

1.1.1 Thesis objectives

This thesis examines the national policy influence of Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ). LGNZ represents the collective interests of New Zealand's local authorities, providing policy advice and advocacy at the national level. As discussed in Chapter Two, because influence is complex, multifaceted, and difficult to observe directly, the analysis adopts lobbying success as an imperfect empirical proxy. Lobbying success is defined as the degree of similarity

between LGNZ's stated policy preferences and final legislative outcomes. This thesis focuses on the formal stages of the policymaking process at the national level, examining LGNZ's lobbying success at the select committee and final legislative stages.

Against this backdrop, this thesis has three main research objectives: 1) to evaluate the lobbying outcome of LGNZ; 2) to identify some of the factors associated with its lobbying success using an original dataset analysed statistically; and 3) to show how these statistical relationships have operated in a specific piece of legislation. Pursuing the first objective involves measuring the extent to which LGNZ has achieved favourable legislative outcomes for local government. To address the second, statistical tests of hypotheses derived from the international interest group literature, the New Zealand policymaking context, and LGNZ's lobbying practices are used to explore the conditions under which LGNZ is more likely to achieve lobbying success. Together, the findings addressing these objectives offer insights into LGNZ's influence, with potential generalisability across multiple legislative cases. Work towards the third objective draws primarily on the perspectives of central and local government actors to examine LGNZ's lobbying in the context of a specific piece of legislation, constituting a single qualitative case study. Consistent with the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design adopted in this thesis, this case study serves a complementary explanatory role, providing contextual depth by examining how statistically identified relationships may operate in practice, not to draw broader conclusions from that single case.

1.1.2 Chapter organisation

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows. Section 1.2 introduces LGNZ, providing background on its role as the collective advocate for local authorities and justifying its selection as the focus of this thesis. Section 1.3 then offers a brief overview of the research design and theoretical positioning, identifying the sequential explanatory mixed methods design, the pragmatic research paradigm, and a pluralist understanding of the policy process as the analytical foundations of this thesis. Section 1.4 discusses the motivations for this thesis and its practical and research significance. Finally, Section 1.5 shows how the subsequent chapters are sequenced to explain how the research is designed, how evidence is gathered and analysed, and how the findings are reached.

1.2 Local Government New Zealand

A significant yet less-explored aspect of local government lobbying is the extent of the influence of LGAs as advocates of local government interests at the national government level. This thesis seeks to contribute to addressing this research gap by examining the national policy influence of LGNZ. Based on the literature review conducted for this thesis, no peer-reviewed study of this kind has been conducted on this association. Existing knowledge of LGNZ's role has largely been drawn from its own communications and public-facing media coverage. These sources offer insight into how LGNZ presents and articulates its advocacy but are necessarily shaped by strategic and reputational considerations. Examining LGNZ through an academic lens enables a more systematic and transparent assessment of its influence that can strengthen the understanding of how local government interests are represented within the New Zealand policymaking processes.

LGNZ (2014) functions as the national voice of New Zealand's local authorities. It advocates on behalf of its member councils and is governed by local government elected members. Membership of LGNZ is voluntary and contingent on payment of an annual subscription. Governance is vested in its National Council of locally elected members from different parts of the country. LGNZ champions the national interests of local authorities and promotes best practices within local government. Its activities include not only advocacy and policy advice but also business support and training to empower members to fulfil their duties to communities. Chapters Six and Seven will provide a more in-depth exploration of LGNZ.

The focus of this thesis on LGNZ addresses some of the specific opportunities and questions raised by early research. Callanan (2012), who studied LGAs' operations in the European Union, suggests that the strengths typically ascribed to them must be validated in a unitary system of government, a political feature of New Zealand. Findings are also yet to be conclusive on whether LGAs are better placed to defend their members' interests in countries where local governments have constitutional recognition (de Widt & Laffin, 2018). New Zealand provides a unique angle from which to examine this issue in that local authorities are statutory creations only with no constitutional protection (Cheyne, 2008; Molineaux & Asquith, 2022; Reid, 2012).

LGNZ serves as the main national advocacy body for local authorities, acting as the collective voice in central–local government engagement. In other countries, more than one association represents various types of local government. Callanan (2012) emphasised the need to compare consolidated and fragmented models of representation, and other scholars have disagreed on which model more effectively represents local interests at central government level (see Chenier, 2009; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Kołsut, 2019). While this thesis is confined to the consolidated model through an examination of LGNZ, comparative insights may still be drawn from the association’s history. The establishment of LGNZ was fairly recent, following the amalgamation of three separate organisations in the late 1990s: Regional Government, Municipal, and Counties Associations (Reid, 2012).

One of LGNZ’s primary objectives is to promote the national interests of local governments (LGNZ Constitution, 2021 [2011]). The association has claimed some successes in this regard:

- LGNZ (2017a) successfully opposed a legislative provision that allows the Local Government Commission to create any new Council Controlled Organisations without seeking the agreement of councils or communities. The association attributed this success partly to tactics such as media campaigns and personal lobbying by several mayors.
- LGNZ (2014a) and sector-led lobbying contributed to the government’s amendment of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2013, removing from sale any psychoactive substances until proven safe.
- LGNZ (2011) successfully lobbied on the Auckland Law Reform Bill, obtaining changes such as expanded local board numbers, extended consultation periods for draft three-year plans, and increased council oversight of council-controlled organisations.

In the examples above, LGNZ claims to have influenced policy outcomes. This thesis systematically compares such cases with unsuccessful attempts to identify the conditions under which the association is effective in shaping national policy and to explain variation in its influence.

1.3 Overview of the research design and theoretical positioning of this thesis

1.3.1 Sequential explanatory mixed methods design

This thesis adopts a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis across two linked phases. Chapter Five discusses the research design, methods, and data sources in detail. This section provides an overview.

The quantitative phase forms the core of this thesis. It systematically assesses LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and the factors influencing its success, using a dataset of 453 distinct policy issues from 37 randomly selected pieces of legislation to address the first two research objectives. The hypotheses tested in this phase draw on literature reviews and content analysis of LGNZ's organisational documents, which identify institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors hypothesised to shape LGNZ's lobbying success. A separate content analysis of parliamentary documents is undertaken to identify policy issues, code LGNZ lobbying positions and outcomes, and construct the dataset used for quantitative analysis. Through categorisation, numerical transformation, and statistical tests, the quantitative phase identifies patterns in LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and enables some generalisation.

The qualitative phase builds on the quantitative results through an in-depth case study. By applying thematic analysis to interviews and documentary sources, it supports the third research objective to provide contextual insight into how the statistical relationships found operated within a specific piece of legislation. Ultimately, the quantitative and qualitative findings are synthesised to develop a more nuanced understanding of LGNZ's lobbying success at the formal stages of policy formation in terms of how the case study findings corroborate, qualify, contrast with, or add to the statistical findings on the conditions shaping LGNZ's lobbying outcomes.

1.3.2 Research paradigm

This thesis aims to understand the influence of LGNZ over New Zealand public policy. As Chapter Two will elaborate, there is yet to be general agreement among scholars on what constitutes interest group influence, both conceptually and operationally. This contention surrounding influence is a crucial factor in determining the research paradigm for this thesis and in guiding the selection of methods that constitute its overall research design.

Despite the range of philosophical and nuanced positions advanced by scholars, positivism/post-positivism and constructivism/interpretivism stand as the dominant paradigms in methodological debates within the social sciences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). These paradigms represent the "forced choice dichotomy," encapsulating objective versus subjective reality and inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 27). Some scholars regard the conflict between proponents of these two paradigms as a political rather than a philosophical or theoretical issue (Hanson, 2008). They argue that having to choose a single research method and exclude others based on a specific philosophical or theoretical position can blind the researcher to new theories and other aspects of a social phenomenon (Kuhn, 1962).

As an alternative paradigm, pragmatism accepts that there are different layers to a phenomenon and that these layers can be studied empirically (Feilzer, 2010). This paradigm directs attention towards addressing real-world issues that may encompass both objective and subjective elements or a combination of the two. Such elements involve identifiable patterns, predictability, and control, as well as uncertainties, ambiguities, and potential outcomes that are yet to be known. Interest group influence has likewise been conceptualised as a multifaceted phenomenon, manifesting in observable policy outcomes, the subjective perceptions of policy actors, and the complex processes linking policy inputs to outputs.

Pragmatists consider the distinction between subjective and objective, or qualitative and quantitative, inquiry more a convention than a true ontological or epistemological separation (Hanson, 2008). These methodological features share the same pursuit, aiming to produce knowledge that closely represents reality and benefits society. As such, pragmatists call for the convergence of quantitative and qualitative methods in social research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A researcher taking a pragmatic approach is consequently freed from the mental and practical constraints of the artificial divide propagated by the mainstream paradigms in social sciences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Pragmatists, guided by abductive reasoning and the aim of producing socially relevant knowledge, encourage the utilisation of different research methods and modes of analysis within a single study (Feilzer, 2010).

This thesis broadly adopts a pragmatic approach by aligning with methodological pluralism to address the challenges of studying LGNZ's influence. This orientation is reflected in the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design in which one phase builds on another to manage the methodological complexity of studying influence. Rather than committing to a single philosophical position, the design seeks a more comprehensive understanding by first identifying general patterns and statistical relationships through quantitative analysis and then using a focused qualitative phase to explore potential meaning and context of those patterns through actor perspectives and narrative evidence.

Pragmatism is also reflected in the use of lobbying success as a proxy for influence. Given the contested and opaque nature of influence, this thesis focuses on an observable outcome: the degree of alignment between LGNZ's stated policy preferences in its submissions and the final provisions of legislation. This emphasis on observable effects enables a systematic analysis that can identify recurring patterns where informal or behind-the-scenes decision-making cannot be directly observed. The development of hypotheses follows a sequential and cumulative logic (more of this in Chapter Five), drawing on international scholarship while grounding theoretical expectations in the specific institutional and political context of New Zealand through analysis of locally produced documents, including LGNZ annual reports and policy remits.

Ultimately, this thesis reflects pragmatic principles by integrating the findings across research methods. By assessing whether quantitative and qualitative results converge, diverge, or extend one another, the study reduces reliance on any single method and supports more balanced conclusions about the national policy influence of LGNZ.

1.3.3 LGNZ as an actor in a pluralist arena

As advocates, LGAs are situated along a pluralist–corporatist continuum (de Widt & Laffin, 2018). In a pluralist setting, an LGA functions as a participant, competing with other interest groups. It primarily employs typical interest group tactics, such as lobbying ministers, senior officials, and parliamentarians, as well as collaborating with other groups. On the other hand, in a corporatist setting, an LGA serves as a privileged peak body working with the central government. It plays a leading role in orchestrating interest group participation in the policy

process. During negotiations with central government, one of the bargaining chips an LGA can put into play is the assurance it can provide that its members will effectively implement any agreements reached. LGNZ is one of the many groups competing to shape public policy in New Zealand, which has been characterised as close to a pluralist democratic society (Buckle, 2009; Marquez, 2021; Mulgan & Aimer, 2013; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011; Walker, 2014). Chapter Four elucidates this argument further by examining the pluralistic features of New Zealand policymaking.

A pluralist assumption that influence arises from competition among multiple actors seeking policymakers' attention (de Widt & Laffin, 2018) underpins the theoretical framework of this thesis. In pluralist settings, access is relatively open and representation is not fixed, making differences between group characteristics, lobbying tactics, and policy issues more likely to shape lobbying outcomes. In corporatist settings, by contrast, influence tends to be channelled through structured relationships between the state and recognised peak bodies, reducing competition between groups over access and limiting the extent to which these differences affect outcomes.

1.4 Motivation for the researcher and significance of this thesis

My master's thesis in 2017 established the crucial role local government plays in national development in the southern Philippines. My interest in this field deepened through my work as a policy analyst for the association of city governments in the Philippines. There, I saw firsthand how an LGA shaped a supportive policy environment for its members and became motivated to continue to explore how such associations navigate national policymaking to advance local government interests.

This thesis is also informed in part by my professional experience as a policy analyst working with the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, where interaction between central government officials, local authorities, and their representative organisation is a normal feature of policymaking. My work has provided me insight into both the role LGNZ plays in national policy processes as well as the institutional and political constraints that shape the association's engagement with those processes. My policy analyst experience has also helped shape the overall design and approach of this thesis.

Local governments, being closer to the people than central government, are tasked with implementing numerous national policies and programs. As advocates for local authorities, LGAs seek to shape national designs, particularly regarding whether and how local governments implement them. In this regard, the findings of this thesis will lead to a better understanding of how an LGA represents local interests at the national level and the factors that may improve the odds of these interests being adopted in national policies. In turn, these findings may provide directions on how LGAs can foster a more enabling environment for their members. Such knowledge is valuable for local authorities in countries like New Zealand, where no written constitutional provision offers specific guarantees to local governments (Cheyne, 2008; Reid, 2012).

In their pursuit of insights into influence, political scientists and scholars of interest group politics should pay closer attention to LGAs: they comprise a small segment of organised interests, but they carry significant weight, and the impacts of their advocacy are not contained within a certain group of people, sectors, or industries. Looking at LGNZ, this thesis highlights an aspect of local government lobbying and the ways in which it is both similar to and different from other types of interests.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis progresses from concept and theory development to evidence gathering and analysis, with each chapter building on insights developed earlier. It is structured to keep theories of interest group influence, New Zealand policymaking, evidence drawn from LGNZ and other sources, and quantitative and qualitative analyses linked throughout. In doing so, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive account of LGNZ's influence, developing arguments incrementally while remaining focused on the research objectives.

Chapter Two: Literature review I – Interest group influence

This chapter reviews the literature on interest group influence to determine how influence can be empirically observed and to scope its factors. To develop a conceptual understanding of influence, this chapter draws on the “three faces of power” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1961; Lukes, 1974). Based on this discourse, this chapter develops the rationale for using

policy outcomes as an indicator of influence, distinguishing this approach from alternatives that prioritise causal mechanisms or perceptions of influence. This chapter also introduces the three-factor framework of interest group influence—comprising institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors—as the theoretical foundation of this thesis, structuring the analysis in the next chapters.

Chapter Three: Literature review II – LGAs, lobbying, and policy influence

This chapter provides a focused review of the interest group literature as it relates to local government associations (LGAs), situating these organisations within the broader scholarship on interest group influence. It highlights the distinctive position of LGAs as representatives of public rather than private interests and examines how this position shapes their lobbying behaviour. This chapter demonstrates that existing research has largely prioritised the functions, organisational forms, and lobbying agendas of LGAs, offering limited insight into how local government interests are translated into national policy outcomes. By applying general theories of interest group influence to the context of local government lobbying, this chapter links broadly recognised explanations of influence to the empirical focus of the thesis.

Chapter Four: New Zealand policymaking and lobbying context

The purpose of this chapter is to map the institutional environment within which lobbying occurs in New Zealand. It identifies the main access points and practices through which influence is exercised, including select committees, ministerial engagement, and interactions with the bureaucracy. In doing so, this chapter grounds international theories of influence in the domestic context and clarifies which pathways to examine in the empirical analysis.

Chapter Five: Research design

This chapter sets out the sequential explanatory mixed methods design that underpins this thesis, providing the framework for examining LGNZ's influence through both patterned outcomes and in-depth analysis. This thesis adopts a pragmatic approach that draws on methodological pluralism, combining an initial quantitative phase that identifies broad statistical associations with a subsequent qualitative case study that explores underlying processes and actors' perspectives. This chapter explains how the theoretical foundations established in earlier chapters, particularly the literature on interest group influence, local

government lobbying, and the New Zealand policymaking environment, are used to guide empirical data collection and to develop testable hypotheses. This chapter outlines the content and quantitative analyses and the design of the qualitative case study, serving as a bridge to the empirical chapters that follow. It also explains how findings from these stages are integrated in the final synthesis.

Chapter Six: LGNZ's lobbying behaviour

This chapter examines LGNZ's lobbying behaviour, which is shaped by its position as a representative of another tier of government in New Zealand and by the resources it brings to the policy process, such as political legitimacy and technical expertise. Using content analysis of LGNZ's strategic documents, including annual reports from 1998 to 2021, this chapter identifies recurring patterns in LGNZ's lobbying approaches, which are found to be predominantly insider oriented. These patterns are eventually refined into organisational characteristics that capture how LGNZ lobbies in practice, which are eventually examined in relation to its lobbying outcomes in the quantitative chapter that follows.

Chapter Seven: LGNZ's lobbying agenda

This chapter examines LGNZ's lobbying agenda and the ways it presents issues in its lobbying. Using content analysis of LGNZ's annual reports, remits, and submissions, this chapter identifies recurring policy issues and positioning in LGNZ's advocacy. These patterns are developed into discrete categories, such as LGNZ's lobbying agenda (e.g., local autonomy and funding), to serve as issue-based factors examined alongside the institutional and organisational factors discussed in Chapters Four and Six to identify the association between these factors and LGNZ's lobbying success.

Chapter Eight: Quantitative findings

This chapter discusses LGNZ's lobbying outcomes across 453 distinct policy issues drawn from 37 randomly selected pieces of legislation. It identifies statistical associations between success and a range of institutional, organisational, and issue-related factors, highlighting relationships that hold across multiple pieces of legislation. These findings narrow the analytical focus and inform the selection of the qualitative case study presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Nine: Qualitative findings

This chapter presents an in-depth examination of the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2 to explore how the factors statically associated with LGNZ's lobbying success operated within a specific legislative process. Applying thematic analysis to data drawn from interviews and documentary evidence, this chapter traces how factors such as government ideology, LGNZ lobbying tactics, and collective action by councils shaped the Bill to become largely favourable to local government. It adds depth and explanation to the patterns identified in the quantitative analysis by showing how they played out in a specific piece of legislation. It also identifies additional factors, including outsider lobbying tactics, that are not captured in the statistical analysis.

Chapter Ten: Discussion and conclusion

Forming the final stage of the sequential explanatory research design, this chapter integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings to assess how they align, diverge, and extend one another. It identifies areas of convergence, as well as points of tension, qualification, and further examination. This synthesis moves beyond the individual findings to provide a comprehensive assessment of LGNZ's national policy influence.

This chapter concludes by outlining this thesis' contributions to interest group literature and to understanding local government advocacy in New Zealand. It reflects on the methodological and analytical choices made throughout, considering the strengths and limitations of the overall research design. It closes by identifying directions for future research and returning to the research questions that motivated the study.

Interest group influence: Theoretical perspectives and empirical approaches

2.1 Introduction

Many researchers investigating different aspects of local government associations (LGAs) have overlooked their role in shaping public policy. This gap is not specific to the study of local government lobbying but reflects a broader issue in the interest group literature. Researchers in the field have “avoided [studying interest group influence] at all costs” (Mahoney, 2007, p. 35), delving into aspects of interest group formation, structure, and activities while tending to sidestep the aspect of influence (Mahoney, 2007; Pritoni, 2015).

An interest group can be understood as an organised association of individuals or organisations that shares one or more concerns and seeks to influence public policy without seeking formal political office (Britannica, 2026). Such organisations are typically formal, membership-based associations that aggregate and represent interests (Knoke, 1986), although broader behavioural definitions encompass any actors engaged in lobbying or policy advocacy (Baroni et al., 2014). In New Zealand, they operate across Parliament, the executive, and public bodies such as government departments, Crown entities, and local government to influence public policy (Te Ara, 2011). They are sometimes referred to as pressure groups because their core activity is exerting pressure on political decision-makers (Te Ara, 2011). Interest groups are also characterised as intermediaries in the political system, articulating and aggregating societal interests and translating them into political pressure on institutions (Almond, 1958). Taken together, these perspectives define interest groups by both their organised form and their political role, with their defining feature being the sustained pursuit of policy influence through a range of formal and informal channels.

Given the above context, Mahoney (2007) highlighted a paradox in interest group research: while influence is the concept most closely associated with interest groups, it is often underexplored in broad comparative research. Mahoney attributed this to the difficulty

of operationalising the concept. While many case studies examine influence in depth, they rarely produce a systematic assessment of the tangible impact of organised interests on public policy (Woll, 2007). Because interest group influence helps explain policy outcomes (Dür, 2008; Pritoni, 2015) and offers insights into the feasibility and consequences of different policy options (Pritoni, 2015), the importance of understanding this phenomenon extends beyond academic research. Identifying who holds influence can also signal the state of a government's democratic accountability (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007).

Influence has been described as the Higgs boson of social research because of its elusive nature (Lowery, 2013; Vannoni, 2014). Just as the so-called 'god particle' has perplexed physicists, the concept of influence has frustrated social scientists attempting to measure it, whether qualitatively or quantitatively. Due to its "notorious difficulty," interest group influence remains a complex and often confusing area of study (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007, p. 2). As a result, only a handful of researchers have dedicated significant effort to understanding it (e.g., Dür, 2008; Finger, 2019; Mahoney, 2007; March, 1955; Pedersen, 2013).

2.1.1 Chapter objective and organisation

This chapter establishes the conceptual and methodological foundations for examining LGNZ's influence by reviewing how influence has been theorised and measured in the literature and identifying an approach suited to the purposes and data of this thesis. Alongside questions of definition and measurement, this chapter draws on theories and empirical evidence that link influence to its determinants. This scoping identifies theoretically grounded factors that may shape LGNZ's lobbying outcomes, which are subsequently used to develop hypotheses about its lobbying success later in this thesis.

Section 2.2 provides the necessary conceptual grounding by locating influence within debates on power and clarifying the analytical focus on observable decision-making that underpins this thesis. Section 2.3 reviews empirical approaches to studying influence and justifies the selection of outcome-based measurement over alternative approaches, such as actors' perceptions and process tracing. Section 2.4 shows that the selected approach can be applied to the New Zealand legislative context to empirically observe LGNZ's influence. Section 2.5

addresses the limitations of the chosen measure and outlines how this thesis mitigates issues of attribution and interpretation. Section 2.6 develops the explanatory basis of LGNZ's policy influence by identifying institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors that inform hypothesis development and subsequent empirical testing. Section 2.7 concludes the chapter by linking these foundations to the next stage of this thesis.

2.2 Three faces of power

Scholars have yet to reach a consensus on what constitutes interest group influence (Pedersen, 2013; Vannoni, 2014). However, a body of work has sought to clarify the concept by drawing more explicitly on debates about power in community decision-making (e.g., Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Finger, 2019; Lowery, 2013; Michalowitz, 2007; Pritoni, 2015; Vannoni, 2014). These scholars have built on longstanding conceptual work on power, applying it more directly to the measurement problem in influence research.

According to Weber (1978), power is the ability of an actor to compel another actor to act in a particular way, even against their will. Weber distinguishes between power as a capacity to impose one's will and power that is viewed as legitimate, where compliance rests on shared beliefs that the exercise of power is justified. Legitimacy in this context is socially constructed and sustained through acceptance, rather than being an automatic or inherent quality of power. Weber also identified three sources through which such legitimacy is established: tradition, as seen in long-standing customs such as monarchies; charisma that inspires devotion to the personal authority of an individual leader (e.g., Joan of Arc and Jesus); and legally defined rules found within most modern states. In the third case, authority rests on acceptance of formal rules and the right of officeholders to exercise power in accordance with these rules. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, this legitimate, positional form of power is central to this thesis's understanding of influence.

The 'two faces of power' model, rooted in the community power debates of the 1950s and 1960s, proposes that power manifests in two distinct forms within formal democratic decision-making (Scott & Marshall, 2009). The first face of power refers to the capacity to affect the content of decisions. This perspective is associated with pluralists such as Dahl (1961), who offered a classic account of this dimension. For pluralists, power hinges on

“participation in the making of decisions” (Laswell & Kaplan, 1950, p. 75) and is assessed through “careful examination of a series of concrete decisions” (Dahl, 1958, p. 466).

Given the research objectives of this thesis, the first face of power is highly useful because it focuses analysis on observable decision-making. Examining concrete decisions and their outcomes makes it possible to observe how this dimension of power is exercised, especially whose preferences are reflected in the decision-making, across multiple cases and in a systematic way. This supports comparison and a degree of generalisation in assessing LGNZ’s policy influence and provides an empirical foundation for examining why these outcomes emerged.

Early proponents of the first face of power perspective assume the existence of an open decision-making arena in which non-participation is taken to imply agreement with the outcomes (Hardy, 2001). Bachrach and Baratz (1962) challenged this assumption, arguing that the rules of the game can be used to limit who participates and which inputs are considered. Building on this critique, they introduced the second face of power: the ability to shape or restrict the political agenda, thereby preventing certain issues from reaching the decision-making stage. Actors may exercise this form of power directly, by controlling the agenda-setting process, or indirectly, by influencing the agenda-setter’s anticipation of their likely response.

While the second face of power concept provides useful insight into how policy considerations may be shaped, it presents significant challenges for empirical observation. Assessing this form of power requires identifying issues or options that were not advanced in decision-making and determining whether their absence resulted from deliberate exclusion rather than from time and capacity constraints, feasibility considerations, or other possible reasons. Because agenda-setting may also occur informally during policy development, involving public servants and stakeholders, or through less accessible processes, such as Cabinet consideration, and because matters that were not taken forward typically leave limited documentary traces, the second form of power is hard to observe systematically and to compare across cases. Despite the second face of power’s theoretical value, this thesis focuses on stages of the policy process that leave sufficient documentary traces. This choice

may exclude other aspects of power, but it reflects a deliberate methodological decision that balances this thesis' research objectives and the practical constraints of empirical observation. By concentrating on the more observable aspects of power, this thesis can systematically compare instances in which power was exercised in favour of LGNZ or not and examine the factors that may have produced these outcomes. The conceptualisation of LGNZ's influence underpinning this approach is discussed further in the next section.

A third face of power, defined as the ability to shape another actor's preferences, perceptions, or desires, was introduced by Lukes (1974). This dimension shifts considerations of influence away from decisions and agendas and towards how beliefs and assumptions may be shaped. This form of power presents a particular empirical challenge, as the analysis tends to focus more on psychological processes than on policymaking. Similar to the second face of power, practice of the third does not leave consistent evidence in policy documents or legislative debates and is therefore less suited to quantitative analysis. While the effects of this dimension of power may be explored retrospectively, for example through interviews, such analysis would require strong assumptions or even some speculation about how this form of power operates in a given context considering its diffuse nature, about what actors might have thought or wanted in its absence, and about whether any reported changes in preferences reflect internalised belief change rather than, for example, strategic positioning or political pressure.

Taken together, the second and third faces of power offer important theoretical insights into the dynamics of influence, but their empirical and attributional limitations require this thesis to focus on stages of the policy process that leave sufficient documentary evidence. By contrast, focusing on the first face of power provides a clear and observable framework for examining lobbying outcomes across multiple legislative cases. However, this focus also directs attention to certain stages of the policymaking process over others, particularly those where the exercise of power can be observed and measured. This approach does not deny that power operates at less formal or accessible points in the policymaking process. Rather, this thesis concentrates on stages where decision-making authority is exercised through recorded and traceable processes, allowing outcomes to be systematically observed,

measured, and explained within this thesis' research objectives and empirical design. Section 2.4 further discusses the application of this approach in the New Zealand context.

2.2.1 Influence vis-à-vis decision-making power

Some studies use the terms 'power' and 'influence' interchangeably (e.g., Pritoni, 2015; Vannoni, 2017). This thesis draws a subtle distinction between the two. Following Finger (2019), power is understood as a latent capacity held by an actor that enables them to decide whether and how to act in support of a particular interest. Influence, by contrast, refers to the ability through which an interest group seeks to affect how that capacity is exercised. Michalowitz (2007) adds that influence operates through persuasion rather than force. It draws on resources such as trust, expertise, credibility, and relationships to engage with power, which, in modern democracies such as New Zealand, is typically grounded in formal authority and institutional roles and is therefore positional.

In the context of policymaking, influence can be understood as a group's ability to persuade those who hold the decision-making power, such as through lobbying, to achieve a desired policy. To provide a clearer basis for examining how influence operates, it is therefore useful for this thesis to establish where such power lies within the New Zealand policy arena. In this regard, the first face of power (and to some extent the second face) is legally vested in the New Zealand Parliament. Section 15 of the Constitution Act 1986 affirms that Parliament holds the "full powers to make laws." The rights to introduce policy proposals, advocate for their adoption, and participate in legislative decisions are reserved exclusively for Members of Parliament (MPs). Only MPs can enact laws through majority voting.

As members of the public, interest groups do not have the above legislative powers. Their involvement is limited to making submissions, lobbying for new laws or amendments, and seeking to influence MPs to vote for or against particular bills (New Zealand Parliament, 2016). Their primary aim is to persuade those in legitimate positions of authority to use their decision-making power in ways that benefit the interest group's causes. This is not to suggest that interest groups cannot engage in other forms of power-related activity. They may seek to shape agendas, apply direct pressure, or affect the conditions under which decisions are made, for example, through public opinion. In some cases, they may even resort to

illegitimate practices, although these fall outside the scope of this thesis. Any of these efforts may succeed or fail. However, in the context of formal policymaking, binding outcomes ultimately depend on the exercise of legitimate decision-making authority. Regardless of the pressures exerted during the policy process, a proposal only acquires legal force once it is enacted through established institutional procedures, particularly parliamentary voting. In this sense, any power-related activity exerted by interest groups operates in relation to, rather than superseding, legally vested decision-making power. For the purposes of this thesis, such activity is thus understood as a means of influence rather than a substitute for formal decision-making authority.

This distinction between power and influence has implications for how the latter can be empirically examined. If interest groups seek to shape the exercise of legitimate decision-making power, then their influence is most meaningfully observed at the point where that power is ultimately expressed. On this basis, Finger (2009) argues that outcomes can serve as a useful gauge for assessing influence, and an interest group's influence can be viewed in terms of the extent to which decision-making power is exercised in ways favourable to that interest group. This raises the question of how such favourability can be measured. The following section reviews the main approaches through which influence has been examined empirically.

2.3 How has interest group influence been empirically studied?

Methodological approaches found in the few studies examining interest group influence include assessing influence through its impact on policy outcomes, through process tracing that reconstructs causal links between policy inputs and outputs, and through actors' perceptions. This thesis adopts the first approach, treating policy outcomes as the primary measure for studying influence. The following subsections discuss each approach in turn.

2.3.1 Impact on policy outcome

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, this thesis views influence in relation to the first face of power, where power is measured through observable decisions. This emphasis on observable outcomes also appears in other theoretical discussions of influence. For example, March (1955), one of the early researchers of influence, argued that "influence is to the study of

decision-making what force is to the study of motion — a generic explanation for the basic observable phenomena” (p. 432). Just as force is inferred from its effects on objects, influence may be examined through its effects on policy decisions. Finger (2019) similarly emphasised that influence is meaningfully assessed through its consequences in policymaking. Consistent with this perspective, influence has been examined empirically through final policy outcomes, viewing those outcomes as the decisions taken by actors holding formal authority (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007).

This thesis considers influence to have occurred when deliberate action taken by an interest group on a specific policy position is followed by decision-makers exercising their formal decision-making authority in ways that favour the group’s policy position. In relevant studies, this favourability is operationalised through an interest group’s ‘preference attainment’, defined as the degree of similarity between the group’s stated policy position and the final policy outcome (Dür, 2008; Klüver, 2009a; Seb, 2016; Vannoni, 2017). This correspondence is assessed by comparing documented policy outcomes with groups’ ideal positions through systematic documentary analysis, using manual or computer-assisted coding (see Klüver, 2009a). The extent of similarity between these positions is treated as an observable indicator of influence.

Assessing influence in terms of observable policy impact offers practical advantages. First, taking this approach enables this thesis to contribute methodologically to the literature on local government associations, where comparable applications are limited. This gap is further discussed in Chapter Three. Second, it provides a more transparent and workable basis for examining interest group influence relative to alternative methods. Dür and De Bièvre (2007, p. 3) describe the analysis of policy outcomes as the “most epistemologically sound and empirically practical” approach to studying interest group influence. By focusing on observable effects on public policy, this method allows researchers to assess whether an interest group’s preferences are reflected in decision outcomes and to examine the conditions under which this occurs (Mahoney, 2007), aligning with this thesis’s objectives of assessing LGNZ’s lobbying outcomes and identifying the factors associated with them. Third, it captures the cumulative effects of lobbying activity, including efforts conducted outside formal or visible channels (Dür, 2008). Finally, it can be applied across larger samples of policy

areas using quantitative analysis, supporting systematic comparison and reducing the risk of drawing conclusions from individual cases (Klüver, 2009a). This feature underpins the quantitative approach adopted in this thesis, which examines LGNZ's outcomes across multiple legislative cases. However, this approach also has limitations, including the possibility that alignment reflects common policy preferences between interest groups and decision-makers rather than the influence of the interest group. These limitations are addressed in Section 2.5.

2.3.2 Process tracing

Process tracing is used to establish a group's influence by reconstructing the chain of events linking group inputs to policy outputs, analysing the group's preferences, its lobbying activities, decision-makers' responses, and the extent to which the resulting policies align with the group's goals. Although process tracing is widely used in the study of interest group influence, Dür (2008) argues that it is not always possible to gather evidence detailed enough to follow every step from a group's preferences, lobbying, to the policy outcome. To the extent that parts of this process remain difficult to observe, assessments of group influence using this approach may therefore be less precise. This challenge may be compounded where research relies heavily on accounts of lobbyists and decision-makers, which may consciously or unconsciously misrepresent influence for strategic or reputational reasons.

Dür (2008) also contends that a "yardstick is lacking" in process tracing for directly measuring influence (p. 254). In practice, studies employing this approach often draw on other methods, most commonly preference attainment based on policy outcomes, to establish whether influence has occurred before tracing causal mechanisms. Compared with quantitative approaches, process tracing is also less suited to analysing influence across large samples of policy cases, as the intensive, case-specific, and often qualitative evidence required to reconstruct decision sequences limits scalability and comparability. Process tracing is designed primarily to unpack intermediate processes linking cause and effect once a relationship between the two has been identified through other means (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). Its role is therefore complementary, helping clarify causal pathways rather than providing systematic measurement (Vannoni, 2014). In the context of this thesis, these features mean that process tracing is better understood as an explanatory tool than as an

approach capable of supporting systematic, multi-case quantitative assessment of LGNZ's policy influence. Chapter Nine draws on the principles of process tracing to examine the sequence of events, decisions, and interactions that shaped LGNZ's lobbying outcomes on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2.

2.3.3 Perceptions of influence

Actors' perceptions have also been used to study interest group influence (Cammisa, 1993; Vannoni, 2017). Researchers gauge the level of influence actors, peers, and experts attribute to an interest group in a particular policy through self or peer evaluations (Dür, 2008). This approach offers simplicity of data collection, usually done through interviews or surveys, the applicability to large number of samples, and a supposed capacity to capture both formal and informal channels of influence (Dür, 2008; Klüver, 2013a; Vannoni, 2014). However, attributed influence is also prone to bias and strategic considerations (Dür, 2008). For instance, leaders and members of an interest group may exaggerate its influence to demonstrate its relevance. Alternatively, it may do the opposite to avoid the perception of undue influence or the creation of a counter-lobby. Individuals may also lack the information or the analytic capacity to provide a reliable assessment of a group's influence.

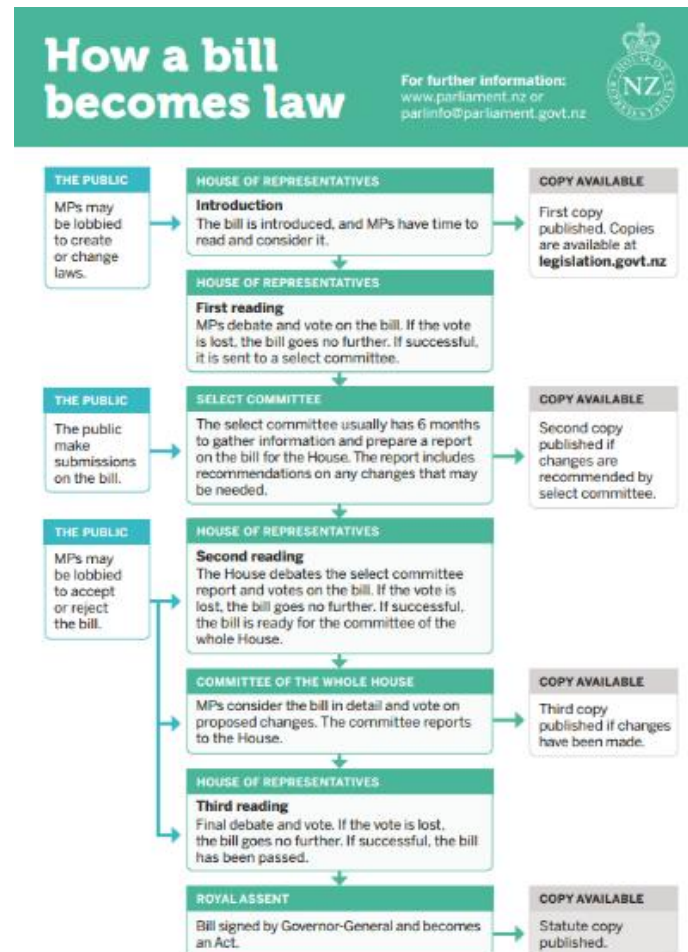
2.4 How this thesis uses policy outcomes to study LGNZ's policy influence

Examining the contents of an adopted policy can offer insights into influence, as they can reveal whose preferences are reflected in the outcome. Some researchers assess this by comparing the initial legislative bill, which is assumed to reflect the government's original position, with the final version passed after public consultation (e.g., Klüver, 2013b; Yackee & Yackee, 2006). If the final legislation aligns closely with a particular group's stated position, it suggests that the group successfully influenced the policy.

This method can be applied in the New Zealand context, where the same political parties hold power in both the legislature and the government. Figure 2-1 below depicts the New Zealand legislative process, in which the initial version of a bill serves as the working draft for public consultation during the select committee process. This version can also be reasonably assumed to represent the government's stance and the views of the majority of policymakers (Pritoni, 2015). Government bills, prepared by ministers as part of the government's legislative programme, make up most of the legislation considered by the New Zealand

Parliament (McGee, 2017). The third and final reading reflects the version of the bill that has gained majority support in the House of Representatives (McGee, 2017).

Figure 2-1 Legislative process in the New Zealand Parliament
source: New Zealand Parliament (2016)



For the purposes of this thesis, LGNZ's policy preferences are identified through an analysis of its official submissions to the New Zealand Parliament. Submissions are a well-established data source in European and American research on interest groups participation in policymaking (Bunea, 2013). To assess LGNZ's preference attainment, this thesis compares its submissions with both the first and third versions of the legislation. The objective is to examine the extent of similarities between these versions and determine whether the final policy outcome moves closer towards LGNZ's policy positions. This approach builds on prior studies that have measured the influence of an interest group based on its impact on policy, as reflected in the alignment between its stated positions and the final legal provisions (e.g., Bunea, 2013; Bunea & Ibenskas, 2017; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Klüver, 2009a, 2013; Pedersen, 2013).

2.5 Key limitations of the chosen measure of influence

Measuring influence by comparing an interest group's goals with final policy outcomes does not fully reflect the complex nature of influence. Returning to the faces of power framework, for instance, this approach prioritises the exercise of decision-making power while giving less attention to agenda-setting or shaping minds. Recognising this limitation in her own work, Mahoney (2007) saw the need to distinguish between this commonly used but narrow measure she termed 'lobbying success' and the broader understanding of interest group influence. This thesis adopts the same distinction. Despite the flaws inherent in this approach, Mahoney also argued that similarity between a group's preferred position and the policy outcome can offer insight into specific aspects of the influence, saying, "Measuring lobbying success and analysing its determinants can provide us with a better understanding of one aspect of the influence process" (p. 37).

Another limitation of this approach is the potential for overlap between the policy preferences of an interest group and those of decision-makers. In such cases, what may seem like influence on the policy outcome could be attributed to the coincidence of preferences. This limitation can be partly addressed by establishing a systematic association between factors related to an interest group and its observed impact on policy outcomes (Nagel, 1975). For an interest group to be said to truly influence the decision-making process, a demonstrable and systematic connection must be identified between the two variables. This thesis seeks to establish such a systematic association by adopting statistical analysis and techniques including Babbie's (2020) elaboration model to distinguish LGNZ's lobbying success from outcomes that may simply reflect shared policy preferences with the government. Rather than taking favourable outcomes automatically as an indication of influence, the analysis undertakes a further examination of whether those outcomes persist after separating the effects of a shared policy position between LGNZ and the government. This allows this thesis to assess whether LGNZ appears to have an impact on policies only in cases when the organisation already agrees with government, or whether their involvement is associated with success when policy changes are being sought. This approach is applied as part of the quantitative analysis in Chapter Nine.

This measuring approach also relies on certain assumptions about interest group behaviour. First, it assumes that interest groups hold clearly defined policy preferences. Second, it presumes that these preferences remain the same over time, excluding the possibility that they may evolve as groups interact with policymakers or respond to shifts in the policy environment. While these assumptions are necessary to enable analysis, they risk understating the adaptive nature of an interest groups' engagement in the policymaking process.

2.6 Factors of group influence: Institution, organisation, and issue

Scholars of local government lobbying have done a “poor job” of capitalising on the major theories of interest group politics (Nownes, 2014, p. 154). While LGAs resemble interest groups in that they lobby governments and should be analytically considered as an interest group (de Widt & Laffin, 2018), they should also be considered “not just another special interest” (Cigler, 2012; Rhodes, 1986, pp. 11–12). The governmental nature of an LGA's membership has implications for which factors are be considered when assessing their influence on national policies.

Three groups of factors have been linked to interest group influence: institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Mahoney, 2007). This section provides a review of the interest group literature across each group of factors, while the next chapter continues the literature review by examining the relevance of these factors for LGAs. Institutional factors are conditions that indicate how receptive to outside influence central government institutions are. These institutions, being the loci of decision-making processes, include structures, consultation rules, lobbying venues, and decision-making procedures which can empower or disenfranchise interest groups. Organisational factors are the attributes of a given interest group, such as its resources and lobbying tactics. Finally, issue-based factors are the characteristics of a specific policy proposal and include whether it has a significant number of stakeholders, whether stakeholders have opposing policy positions, and whether the policy proposal attracts a high level of public interest. LGAs may relate to institutional, organisational, and issue-based characteristics in distinct ways, which must be considered.

Empirical studies on interest group influence have examined its factors in an ad hoc manner (Pritoni, 2015). Various factors could explain why a group succeeds in one case but not in another, or why it chooses to protest in some instances while cooperating with policymakers in others. Baumgartner and Leech's (1998) extensive literature review suggests that previous case studies on interest groups have largely failed to compare given factors systematically across cases and instead have focused on some while overlooking others:

The cases simply vary on too many points, not only the substance of the particular issue studied but the decision-making venue, whether the issue generated conflict among groups, whether the issue was highly salient, and whether the group in question had effective allies within government for that issue. Does one study come to a different conclusion because one case was highly salient and the other was not, or simply because one occurred decades before the other and interest group strategies have changed over the years? There is no way to determine, in retrospect, which was the decisive factor. (p. 127)

Table 2-1 below shows that Baumgartner and Leech's (1998) aforementioned concerns extend to investigations into factors associated with the successes and failures of local government lobbying. Studies have examined individual factors or collections of factors without comparing them systematically. This thesis aims to address that gap by examining these three groups of factors to better understand what drives lobbying success for LGNZ. The following sections discuss these three-factor framework in detail, drawing on my extensive review of literature on interest group influence.

Table 2-1 Factors of influence in local government lobbying

FACTORS	FINDINGS													AUTHOR(S)
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	
Institutional														
Type of Government (Federal/Unitary)	■	■			■	■	■		■					A. de Widt and Laffin (2018)
Democratic Accountability														B. Callanan (2012)
Electoral System														C. Potter (2011)
Policymaking Rules	■	■												D. de Jesus (2010)
Consultation Platforms	■					■	■						■	E. Chenier (2009)
Party Politics	■		■										■	F. Kettunen and Kull (2009)
Legal Protection for Local Governments	■				■				■					G. CEMR (2007)
Organisational														
Type of Interest Represented								■	■					H. Freeman and Nownes (1999)
Resources (finance, staff, legal, information, political)		■		■				■	■					I. Blom-Hansen (1999)
Tactics (direct/indirect)				■		■		■	■	■				J. De Soto (1995)
Insider Status	■	■						■	■			■	■	K. Cigler (1994)
Fragmented vs. Consolidated Representation	■	■						■	■		■		■	L. Cammisa (1993)
Issue Characteristics														
Issue Scope (far-reaching implications)				■	■									M. Isaac-Henry (1984)
Issue Saliency (public interest)				■	■									
Contentiousness of a policy issue	■	■		■	■		■			■				
Technical complexity	■											■		

2.6.1 Institutional factors

Mahoney (2007) conducted a comparative analysis of lobbying success in the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), on the premise that democratic accountability and the design of a political system play a role in shaping interest group influence. This idea is underpinned by the responsiveness of policymakers, which is influenced by these factors. Democratic accountability, Mahoney maintained, makes politicians in the US more receptive to organised interests, as they rely on public support for re-election. In contrast, policymakers in the EU, who are not directly elected by the public, may not be as responsive. The design of the political system also matters. The US federal government, with its combination of a presidential system, weak political parties, and an electoral setup focusing on small districts, is particularly prone to interest group influence (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Additionally, systems involving direct elections and private funding make policymakers more susceptible to the demands of advocacy groups, particularly of those with significant resources (Mahoney, 2007).

The rules governing policymaking have been identified as being equally critical in determining which interest groups succeed. Institutions establish rules for consultation, lobbying opportunities, and decision-making procedures that can have the effect of either empowering or disenfranchising interest groups (Bunea, 2013). For example, the multiple layers of

decision-making in the EU create various channels for influence through which diverse interests can shape policy outcomes (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). In the US, any legislator has the ability to sponsor a bill, leading to the introduction of hundreds of bills each year, some of which are pushed by specific interest groups (Mahoney, 2007).

Research into interest group influence also highlights structural strength as affecting a government's capacity to resist lobbying pressure. Minority governments, for example, often grant interest groups greater access to the parliamentary arena (Chaqués-Bonafont & Muñoz-Márquez, 2016), a trend particularly evident in Westminster parliamentary systems (Pickup & Hobolt, 2015). In Norway, Borge and Ratso (1997) observed that higher national spending for local development was associated with greater party fragmentation and the presence of minority coalition governments.

The primary discussion of how institutional factors operate in the New Zealand policymaking context is presented in Chapter Four. Section 4.5 maps broad international theories onto the domestic environment, identifying the 1996 shift to New Zealand's current Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system as a transformative institutional feature that has expanded access points for interest groups such as LGNZ.

2.6.2 Organisational factors

Organisational factors, characteristics of an interest group that contribute to its ability to influence policy outcomes, can be grouped into type of interest, group resources, and lobbying tactics. Considering the type of interest being represented, Mahoney (2007) found that policymakers in democratically accountable systems, for example, tend to be more responsive to groups advocating citizen-based rather than business-oriented interests. Dür & De Bièvre (2007) adds another taxonomy, comprised of diffused and concentrated interests. Business-oriented groups, typically having concentrated interests, tend to mobilise more easily due to their ability to overcome collective action problems. Conversely, diffused interests rely on factors such as alignment with elections or favourable public opinion to gain influence.

Group resources refers to “anything that can be used to sway the specific choices or the strategies of another individual” (Dahl, 1961, p. 226). These may include campaign funding, knowledge about constituency interests, expertise on policy matters, and information on the opinions of other policymakers (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Lobbying tactics are activities employed to shape policy outcomes such as directly engaging with decision-makers, influencing their selection, mobilising public opinion, and employing structural coercion (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). These can be categorised into insider or outsider tactics (Freeman & Nownes, 1999). Insider tactics involve direct engagement with policymakers, such as presenting research to central government, supporting specific viewpoints, aiding in legislation formulation, or liaising with members of select committees; outsider tactics involve activities like grassroots mobilisation to exert external pressure on policymakers.

Building on this literature, Chapter Six examines how these organisational factors operate in the New Zealand context through LGNZ. Section 6.4 maps LGNZ’s internal resources, expertise, and tactical preferences, showing that while it has limited legal and financial leverage, it possesses legitimacy and substantial informational resources from its member councils. Section 6.5 confirms LGNZ’s primary reliance on insider lobbying tactics with selective use of outsider strategies, providing the foundation for understanding how organisational capacities shape this organisation’s influence within New Zealand’s policymaking environment.

2.6.3 Issue-based factors

Researchers have identified certain characteristics of a policy issue to be important determinants of interest group influence. Among these features are the contentiousness, scope, public salience, and technical complexity of a policy issue. Drawing from her examination of various interest groups in both the US and the EU, Mahoney (2007) goes so far as to conclude that these are the most important factors of influence. Studies on local government lobbying further substantiate the significance of the relationship between some of these factors and influence (e.g., de Jesus, 2010; De Soto, 1995; de Widt & Laffin, 2018).

A specific interest group typically encounters greater difficulty in exerting influence over highly contentious policy issues marked by clashing interests than over a singular,

uncontested perspective (Mahoney, 2007). The likelihood of success also diminishes when a policy issue has far-reaching implications or involves multiple interests. In such cases, the policymaking process is susceptible to disagreements, and policymakers are less inclined to be swayed by a singular interest group. Furthermore, the public salience of a policy issue reduces the probability of an interest group influencing the outcome (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). The more public attention a specific policy decision attracts, the less probable it is that policymakers will heed the opinion of a particular advocate. Conversely, when an interest group adopts a position aligned with public opinion, its influence on the outcomes may appear to be larger, assuming that public opinion operates independently of the group's activities (Culpepper, 2010).

Research indicates that an interest group advocating for a narrowly defined issue characterised by minimal opposing views and public attention is more likely to achieve success. For instance, groups that are lobbying in a niche, where issue scope and public salience are reduced, will encounter fewer competing interests and less public attention (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Mahoney, 2007). As the level of an issue's technical complexity increases, decision-makers will be more likely to seek input from specific actors. Given the tendency of each domain to vary in terms of scope and technicality, policy domains have been considered a significant issue-based factor. For example, environmental policies are likely to garner interests from a wider range of stakeholders compared to those focused on the internal operations of local government, which may also be considered a niche for and requiring technical expertise from an LGA.

Chapters Four and Seven examine how issue-based factors shape LGNZ's influence in New Zealand. Chapter Four, Section 4.5.3, applies international theory to the domestic context, showing that highly contested policies, such as the 1990s local government reforms, reduce the likelihood of success for a single lobbying group, while technically complex issues increase influence by creating demand for specialised knowledge. Chapter Seven situates these factors within LGNZ's lobbying agenda, highlighting core principles such as local autonomy and local democracy that unite local authorities and guide LGNZ's advocacy. Together, these chapters demonstrate how the nature of a given policy issue shapes LGNZ's capacity to influence policymaking in New Zealand.

2.6.4 Interaction between these factors

Research, especially in the context of local government lobbying, has posited or demonstrated that various factors may interact to foster either a supportive or adverse environment for interest group influence (e.g., de Jesus, 2010; Entwistle & Laffin, 2003; Freeman & Nownes, 1999). As touched on by earlier discussions, some of the explanations for the relationship between one factor and influence are at times underpinned by another factor. Recall that lobbying will typically be less likely to succeed if the scope of the issue is broad. It is likely for the decision-making process in such cases to be contentious and for policymakers to refrain from being led by a single special interest. This close interaction between the scope and contentiousness of an issue was observed by de Jesus (2010) to be an important determinant of the degree of influence LGAs had in Brazil and the Netherlands.

The choice of lobbying tactics can depend on an interest group's resources, a hypothesis particularly noted in studies on local government lobbying. Freeman & Nownes (1999), for instance, claim that local government lobbyists tend to have limited resources but great legitimacy, hence they rely more on insider tactics such as presenting research, helping to draft legislation, or speaking to the members of select committees. Meanwhile, Entwistle & Laffin (2003) demonstrated how an LGA's choice of lobbying approach is contingent on institutional factors, particularly the power relations between central and local governments.

2.7 Moving forward

This chapter has underscored the persistent challenges associated with defining and measuring influence, making it one of the most difficult aspects of empirically analysing interest groups and their relationship with public policy. The complexity of influence is reflected in the myriad of factors that researchers have theorised or empirically proven to contribute to it. A gap exists in the literature necessitating studies that examine factors of influence systematically across cases and key groups of factors. This need is particularly pronounced in the New Zealand context, where research on interest groups similar to the form and scope of this thesis is limited. The next chapter situates LGAs within the interest group literature and examines how these factors of influence manifest in the specific context of local government lobbying.

Local government associations, lobbying, and policy influence

3.1 Introduction

Local government actors have strong incentives to influence the national policymaking process (Callanan, 2012; Jensen, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Many local government functions and activities are affected by central government policy decisions: their powers and responsibilities are defined and enabled by national policy and their capacity to fulfil these responsibilities often depends on resources provided by central government.

The need for separate local authorities to have a unified voice in the national policymaking process helps explain the emergence of local government associations or LGAs (Cammisa, 1993; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). Reflecting the fact that, in many European countries, consultations with local governments are conducted primarily through their associations, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR, 2007) argues that LGAs are the most suitable entities for presenting positions and influencing policy on behalf of local and regional tiers of government. Beyond Europe, LGAs exist in almost every country with autonomous sub-territorial units (Kořut, 2019). Despite the recognised role they play in national policymaking, LGAs and local government lobbying in general have been given limited scholarly attention, particularly when compared with other types of interest groups (Jensen, 2019; Nownes, 2014).

3.1.1 Chapter objectives and organisation

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to understanding local government associations (LGAs) as national policy advocates. It draws on two main bodies of scholarship: research on interest groups and lobbying and studies of LGAs and intergovernmental relations. The review serves two purposes. First, it situates LGAs within the broader interest group literature to clarify how they compare with other organised actors seeking policy influence. Second, it examines existing knowledge about LGAs to identify gaps, particularly concerning their lobbying effectiveness and the conditions shaping their policy impact.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 3.2 reviews existing scholarship on LGAs, outlining their organisational characteristics, functions, and position within intergovernmental relations. Section 3.3 then situates LGAs within the interest group literature, identifying limitations in the current body of work, particularly the lack of attention given to assessing lobbying effectiveness and policy impact. Section 3.4 examines how previous studies have approached the measurement of LGA policy influence, highlighting methodological constraints that motivate the approach adopted in this thesis. Drawing on the three-factor framework introduced in the previous chapter—institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors—Section 3.5 synthesises explanatory factors identified in research on local government lobbying, informing the analytical framework developed in later chapters. Section 3.6 concludes the chapter.

3.2 What are local government associations?

Shott (2017) defines LGAs as membership organisations for local governments within a geographic area, which could be a sovereign country, a federation, or a subnational unit such as a province or state. In other cases, state and local-level associations themselves form a peak body to efficiently engage central government (Kofsut, 2019). LGAs are compelling research subjects due to the paradoxes they operate within. They represent a sphere of government without actually being one, and they need to balance being political and non-partisan (Chenier, 2009). Another paradox lies in the collective representation of LGAs, as they advocate for local concerns on a national scale (de Widt & Laffin, 2018). They must take a broad view while promoting specific local concerns and develop national policy stances while their members are mostly concerned with local issues. Their membership is also characterised by different cleavages such as rural versus urban, cities versus towns, and declining versus growing areas. The ways in which LGAs navigate through these contradictions in pursuit of common objectives has been explored to some extent: Shott (2017), Cigler (1994), and Hays (1991) have found that LGAs pursue specific advocacies depending on their internal composition.

Because LGAs represent public institutions, scholars have contrasted them with private interest groups (e.g., Cigler, 1994; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Rhodes, 1986). In particular, Rhodes

(1986) distinguishes LGAs as being topocratic, not limited by professional or functional interests. LGAs' stake is drawn from the geographic area of the government unit they represent, so their advocacy spans multiple policy areas. They also have the status of a legitimate representative to central government. This legitimacy is accompanied by the assumption that they possess a privileged position in consultations and negotiations with central government relative to the positions available to private interest groups.

Concerning this supposed privileged position, some studies abroad, particularly in the US and the Netherlands, suggest that LGAs hold a relatively strong position in their respective lobbying arenas (Freeman & Nownes, 1999; Zhang, 2019). However, others, such as de Jesus (2010) on Brazil, Callanan (2012) on Ireland, and de Widt and Laffin (2018) on the United Kingdom, find contrasting evidence. Across LGAs in Europe, CEMR (2007) observed considerable variations in how much they are being consulted by their respective central governments and in the extent to which these consultative measures are institutionalised. Contrasting findings suggest that any perceived lobbying advantage stemming from an LGA's governmental status cannot be broadly generalised. Beyond the appearance of officiality, a range of other factors shapes the policy influence of a given LGA.

With respect to the roles played by LGAs, studies have placed policy advocacy front and centre among the reasons for their creation (Buis, 2009; Entwistle, 2002; Flanagan, 1999; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Kołsut, 2019; Rhodes, 1986; Zhang, 2019). Other functions highlighted include the provision of services to their members (de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Kołsut, 2019; Shott, 2017); mobilisation of local governments to engage central government (Chenier, 2009; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Isaac-Henry, 1984); bringing local government work to the public's consciousness (Isaac-Henry, 1984); and promotion of citizen-centred governance methods, as well as participation in both national and international fora (Kołsut, 2019). The performance of these other roles is seen as 'selective benefits' provided by LGAs to retain both their members and, thus, their lobbying legitimacy (de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Goldsmith-Jones, 1988; Shott, 2017).

Scholars largely agree that LGAs facilitate central–local relations in the interest of local government. They strengthen the position of local authorities in the intergovernmental arena

(Callanan, 2012); provide a national platform for local governments (Entwistle, 2002); and serve as a source of local government feedback for central government actors (Cigler, 1994). CEMR (2007) recommends that national governments seeking an efficient consultation with their subnational counterparts strengthen the role played by LGAs.

3.3 Gaps in understanding LGA policy influence

Early studies laid significant groundwork for conceptualising LGAs. However, while knowledge about their organisational characteristics, functions, and internal structures is relatively extensive, little is known about LGAs beyond these aspects. For instance, there is a gap in understanding whether and how they influence national policies. LGAs remain an understudied topic (Callanan, 2012; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Freeman & Nownes, 1999; Jensen, 2019; Kołsut, 2019; Nownes, 2014; Shott, 2017). Considering the accounts from previous studies about how local governments consistently seek to influence national policies and the purported privilege and power they wield as an interest group (at least in some cases), these areas demand more scholarly attention.

The national policy influence of LGAs may have received limited scholarly attention because local governments and their representatives are rarely covered in the interest group literature. LGAs occupy a distinctive position within the interest group landscape. They do not fit conventional interest group categories such as businesses, corporations, trade unions, or smaller advocacy organisations representing consumer, community, or cause interests. As a result, they have received comparatively little attention in the interest group literature, which has largely focused on private actors (Freeman & Nownes, 1999; Jensen, 2019; Nownes, 2014). Their unique position stems from representing local governments and, therefore, a component of the governmental structure rather than private interests (Freeman & Nownes, 1999). Despite this distinctive role, they remain a “relatively little researched area of studies of public administration, local self-government and local policy” (Kołsut, 2019, p. 51; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). Overall, this gap results in an incomplete understanding of interest groups and lobbying, as local governments and their associations also compete for policymakers’ attention and seek to shape policy outcomes. This gap also leaves the extent and mechanisms of the policy impact of LGAs largely unexplored.

The few studies that examine LGAs as a lobbying group have generally focused on a narrow range of research questions (Jensen, 2019). Cigler (1994) identified what sorts of interests county associations in the United States advocate for at the state level. Shott (2017) explained how such interests within Canadian municipal associations are determined in terms of the characteristics of membership composition (e.g., whether mostly urban, rural, or diverse). Meanwhile, Entwistle & Laffin (2003) identified the broad strategies (i.e., partner, negotiator, or think-tank approach) that an LGA may adopt to influence central government, depending on the power relations between central and local governments. Freeman and Nownes' (1999) findings suggest that LGAs have attributes and resources akin to those of an influential interest group, but they do not apply the same lobbying techniques (e.g., doing favours, informal contacts, advertising) that non-government organisations would normally use. Also focussing on tactics, Callanan (2012) demonstrated that organisational resources (e.g., staff, technical expertise, legal recognition) dictate how LGAs in Denmark, England, and Ireland respond to the policy initiatives of the European Union.

These earlier studies stopped short of determining the extent to which local interests are translated into macro level policy outcomes. They do not indicate which resources or tactics are associated with lobbying success. More broadly, scholars have paid limited attention to assessing how successful local governments are as lobbyists (Cammisa, 1993; de Jesus, 2010; De Soto, 1995; Jensen, 2019; Johnson, 2005; Nownes, 2014; Payson, 2019). Given that LGAs primarily exist to uphold local government interests at the national policymaking level, understanding their policy influence represents one of the most crucial yet underexamined areas of knowledge about them.

A few attempts have been made to assess LGA influence and explain its determinants, notably by de Jesus (2010) in Brazil and the Netherlands and Cammisa (1993) in the United States. Both studies relied on stakeholders' perceptions of policy influence rather than on observed policy outcomes. Using comparative case analyses of selected policy issues, these studies identified the technical knowledge of LGA members as a potentially important resource for lobbying success. However, these analyses share a key limitation common to many comparative case studies, whereby causations are inferred in an "informal and intuitive manner" rather than established systematically (Gerring, 2006; J. Mahoney, 2007; Rihoux &

Lobe, 2009; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 7). This thesis addresses this limitation by examining LGA influence through systematic analysis of policy outcomes across multiple cases, applying structured coding and quantitative techniques to assess associations between organisational and contextual factors and observed lobbying success.

3.4 Measuring LGA policy influence

As covered in Section 2.3 of the previous chapter, scholarly attempts to measure interest group influence have generally employed three empirical approaches. The first approach, which is adopted in this thesis, focuses on policy outcomes by assessing lobbying success, defined as the degree of alignment between an interest group's stated positions and the final legislative decision (i.e., the third reading version of a bill). While representing a narrower operationalisation of influence, lobbying success offers a practical and observable proxy for analysis. The second is process tracing, which clarifies intermediate mechanisms by examining the causal sequence linking a group's inputs to policy outcomes. The third relies on perceived influence, drawing on surveys or interviews to capture self or peer assessments of a group's impact.

A review of existing research on LGA lobbying effectiveness indicates that an outcome-based approach has not been applied in this area (see Table 3-1 for a summary). In some cases, the methodological strategies presented in this table were not explicitly articulated by the authors and were inferred from the design and presentation of the given study. By examining LGNZ's impact on policy outcomes, this thesis contributes methodologically and provides further empirical insight into the extent to which an LGA may influence national policymaking.

Table 3-1 How LGA influence has been measured

Author(s)	Case(s)	Method
Callanan (2012)	UK Local Government Association Local Government Denmark LGAs in Ireland	Process tracing or similar
Jesus (2010)	National Confederation of Municipalities (Brazil) Association of Netherlands Municipalities	Process tracing or similar
Freeman and Nownes (1999)	Intergovernmental lobbyists in California, South Carolina, and Wisconsin	Attributed influence via survey
De Soto (1995)	Mayors and managers of US cities with more than 60,000 population	Attributed influence via survey
Cammisa (1993)	State and local associations in the US	Attributed influence via interviews
Rhodes (1986)	UK Local Government Association	Process tracing or similar

3.5 Applying the three-factor framework to local government lobbying

As discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.6, the determinants of interest group influence have been grouped into three broad categories of factors: institutional, organisational, and issue-based. Institutional factors refer to the external structural conditions and rules of the political system that shape policymakers' receptiveness to outside influence, including formal consultation arrangements, the configuration of political institutions, and the presence of minority governments. Organisational factors concern the internal attributes of the interest group itself, such as its resources, including technical expertise, legitimacy, and financial capacity, as well as its use of insider or outsider lobbying tactics. Issue-based factors relate to the characteristics of the policy proposal, where lobbying outcomes may be shaped by technical complexity, public salience, and the degree of contention or conflicting interests involved. Together, these categories provide the multidimensional framework used in this thesis to analyse the lobbying success of LGNZ.

Building on this discussion, this section considers how these factors manifest in the context of LGAs. Local governments may also lobby independently of their associations, for example through direct communication with policymakers (De Soto, 1995) or by engaging professional lobbyists (Payson, 2019). This thesis, however, focuses on the representation of local government interests as a collective rather than as individual units. Through LGAs, local interests not only converge but also take on a national scope and character. The following subsections review how political structures, central–local relations, consultation

arrangements, and party dynamics shape the prospects and constraints that LGAs such as LGNZ may face in national policymaking.

3.5.1 Institutional factors

National political structures create specific lobbying opportunities or limitations for LGAs (Hays, 1991; Kettunen & Kull, 2009; Shott, 2015). At a fundamental level, scholars have considered how the systems of government affect the capacity of LGAs to infiltrate the national policymaking process. Federalism has been a particular topic of contention in this regard (Callanan, 2012; CEMR, 2007; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Kettunen & Kull, 2009). Some scholars argue that local government interests are often overlooked within federal structures, a consequence of multiple layers of government (de Widt & Laffin, 2018) and the bargaining between state and central authorities (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

On the other hand, federalism has also been considered to offer a relative autonomy arising from legal guarantees for self-government that regional and local governments enjoy (CEMR, 2007; Kettunen & Kull, 2009). As an example, the Netherlands as a decentralised unitary state has safeguards for local autonomy embedded in its legal and political frameworks (de Jesus, 2010; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). Such formal agreements in central–local relations tend to offer LGAs a strong position in decision-making processes (Blom-Hansen, 1999). The case of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) highlighted how such conventions enable an LGA to defend its members from centrally imposed policies and local budget cuts (de Jesus, 2010; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). Alternatively, the UK Local Government Association was cited as a cautionary example of how the lack of an institutionalised relationship with central government, coupled with a dependency on membership fees and pressure from bigger cities, may reduce the role of an LGA from policy advocate to service bureau (de Widt & Laffin, 2018).

The existence of such legal conventions suggests that central government actors cannot always decide unilaterally on matters concerning local government. In such circumstances, it is preferable for them to confer with one or a few LGAs than with a multitude of local councils (Isaac-Henry, 1984). When LGAs act as a focal point for the national government, they can put forward collective interests on the political agenda, with the presence of consultation

platforms and procedures has been identified in several studies as key channel for their influence (CEMR, 2007; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Kettunen & Kull, 2009). However, these studies also make clear that the mere existence of consultative mechanisms does not always equate to influence. For example, Isaac-Henry (1984) observed that the creation of the UK Consultative Council for Local Government Finance did not curb the tendency of central government to consult without meaningfully listening, nor did it lessen ministers' contempt for associations.

The widescale assessment conducted by CEMR (2007) identified key qualities of consultation, including institutionalisation and rigour, that make it an effective instrument for LGAs. Various structures can formalise consultation procedures, including constitutional or legal requirements, cooperation agreements, governmental and parliamentary rules, commitments to good practices, and principles in the law. The degree of obligation within a legal framework for both parties involved can have a significant influence on the effectiveness of consultations. In highly centralised countries where local and regional governments often struggle to be heard, establishing a precise legal framework is essential for genuine inclusion in the decision-making process. Creating consultation structures with well-defined procedural rules, such as meeting frequency, participant composition, and the weight of positions presented, plays a pivotal role in fostering meaningful dialogue between central authorities and local and regional governments. Other studies confirm the CEMR findings by pointing out how sporadic and informal communication between central government and LGAs lead to an unfavourable outcome for local government (see de Jesus, 2010; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Kettunen & Kull, 2009).

Party politics can also impact how effectively LGAs represent member interests. In Norway, for example, Borge and Ratso (1997) found that the ideological orientation of central government, based on party composition, was associated with its policy position on local government funding. Goldstein and You (2017) highlighted the role national party affiliations play in shaping the policy priorities of local officials (Goldstein & You, 2017) which, in turn, impact the ease with which local government's national policy goals can be achieved.

While party affiliations between central and local actors can result in more supportive voices for an LGA in the policymaking process, the majority of scholars tend to take a sceptical perspective on the impact of party politics on LGAs (de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Entwistle, 2002; Entwistle & Laffin, 2003; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Potter, 2011). They find associations would rather steer clear of party politics, noting that some LGAs establish internal regulations to maintain this distance. Isaac-Henry (1984, p. 139) detailed how becoming too entrenched in “playing the party game” led to conflicts among mayors from different parties and raised doubts about whether national parties, rather than the member-councils, were truly being represented.

3.5.2 Organisational factors

While local government lobbying associations are broadly comparable with other interest groups in terms of the attributes they possess (Jensen, 2019), scholars have highlighted organisational qualities unique to LGAs that are relevant to policy influence. For instance, it is relatively challenging for LGAs to maintain cohesion within its association and among its members. A single LGA is expected to represent a diverse membership in terms of function, capacity, and needs (Freeman & Nownes, 1999). The tangible differences to be bridged provide a rationale for the creation of multiple associations representing the specific needs of each local government type (Isaac-Henry, 1984). However, as was observed in the former associations in the UK, doing this can generate conflict with respect to the distribution of responsibilities and central grants (Entwistle & Laffin, 2003; Isaac-Henry, 1984; Rhodes, 1986). At a council level, De Soto (1995) found that larger and wealthier local authorities are more likely to pursue individual lobbying rather than rely on their respective associations. In New Zealand, this is somewhat illustrated by Auckland Council and Christchurch City Council both deciding to leave LGNZ so they can advocate more directly on issues affecting their own communities (Plummer, 2023; Christchurch City Council, 2024).

Lobbying resources represent a key organisational factor determining interest group influence. With respect to LGAs, these were grouped by Callanan (2012) into five different types. An LGA’s *financial resource*—income—is considered a yardstick for its size, power, and independence. Notably, the UK LGA has attributed its success in pushing for legislative reforms to the considerable resources it spent on lobbying (de Widt & Laffin, 2018). An LGA’s *organisational resource* is comprised of the secretariat, its size and extent of specialisation,

committee structures, access to members, location, and facilities. Its *Informational resource* refers to the professional knowledge it holds on technical and specialised issues within local government and has been characterised as an LGA's main currency of influence (de Jesus, 2010; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). Callanan identified as *legal and political resources*, respectively, formal recognition of an LGA as part of institutionalised arrangements in the policymaking and connections through party linkages. What may be considered as additional political assets for LGAs are their insider status and the legitimacy that comes from representing elected local authorities. In theory, LGAs automatically possess credibility, trust, and a common understanding of the rules, which many private interests may require significant investment to obtain (Freeman & Nownes, 1999). However, other scholars have found such familiarity with central government has its drawbacks. At times, national policymakers have used their access as a strategy to capture or co-opt LGA leaders, an inference made in cases in the Netherlands and the UK (de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Isaac-Henry, 1984).

Concerning tactics, Cammisa (1993) and Cigler (1994) claim that many of the lobbying activities undertaken by LGAs are akin to those of private interest groups. They present information to decision-makers, engage the media, and mobilise public opinion. Other researchers argue that LGA lobbying techniques are different from those employed by their nongovernmental counterparts, with greater emphasis placed on insider rather than outsider tactics. Freeman & Nownes (1999), for instance, claim that local government lobbyists tend to have limited resources but great legitimacy. Hence, they rely more on insider tactics such as presenting research, helping to draft legislation, or speaking to the members of select committees. They also tend to refrain from doing favours for central government officials, participating in electoral campaigns, engaging in informal contacts, and advertising (Kettunen & Kull, 2009).

3.5.3 Issue-based factors

The scope and contentiousness of an issue were noted by several studies as important factors that define the outcome of local government lobbying. (e.g., CEMR, 2007; de Jesus, 2010; De Soto, 1995; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). When contending with a diverse array of actors, including trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), chambers of commerce, and social and economic groups, LGAs usually face a disadvantaged position. This is rooted in the fact

that local governments are tasked with implementing numerous laws and must navigate functional interests, not only from private groups but also from central government departments whose responsibilities overlap with their own. As mentioned in Section 3.2 LGAs are topocratic, representing territorial interests rather than specific functional interests. An example of how such dynamics can play out to the detriment of an LGA is highlighted in a case study of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG):

For the VNG, this problem [the difficulty of representing local interests] has been aggravated by strong competition from interest groups with a strong service rather than a territorial focus. These service-oriented interest groups maintain strong links to the service departments, such as the association of Dutch health insurers that maintains strong links to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. As they stress uniform nationwide service levels, the service-oriented interest groups clash with local government interest groups, as the VNG maintain the view that cost-effective decentralization can only occur if subnational entities are equipped with sufficient implementation autonomy, a position fiercely opposed by non-territorial interest groups who fear widening inter-local differences in service level. Functional interests, based in the big service central government departments and often closely integrated with local government services, also pose a serious challenge to bodies representing the territorial interests of local governments. (de Widt & Laffin, 2018, pp. 6–7)

When engaging with technically complex issues, possessing valued and relevant expertise tends to enhance the influence of interest groups. This aligns with Callanan's (2012) observations regarding LGAs in Denmark and the UK, which leverage technical advice and direct access to local governments to impact EU policymaking. LGAs have been shown to employ the strategy of exerting technical influence and shaping legislation details rather than outright opposing its fundamental purpose (de Jesus, 2010; Entwistle & Laffin, 2003). For an LGA, engaging positively with the central government's agenda, rather than opposing decision-makers, can be an effective means of influencing policy

3.6 Moving forward

Chapter Two established this thesis' adopted definition of interest group influence and explored its three-factor framework: institutional, organisational, and issue characteristics. Chapter Three applied this same definition and framework in reviewing how LGAs' influence has been studied, situating LGAs within both the interest group and intergovernmental relations literatures. In reviewing existing research on LGAs, it identified a key research gap, particularly the limited systematic assessment of such associations' lobbying effectiveness and policy impact. Applying the three-factor framework to LGA lobbying, it clarified how different determinants of influence operate in this advocacy setting. This thesis now moves from this general application to a specific domestic context. Chapter Four extends the same definition and framework to the New Zealand policymaking environment, bringing the analysis closer to the empirical focus on LGNZ.

Influencing public policy in New Zealand

4.1 Introduction

New Zealand public policy has been characterised in the literature as being shaped within a structured institutional environment in which proposals advance through established routines, procedures, and decision-making authorities (Grey, 2015; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Although the policy process can be “fraught and politically charged,” it remains “moderately rational and therefore knowable” (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011, p. xi). This description is arguably most applicable to the later stages of the policymaking process—the focus of this thesis—where decision-making occurs within formal institutional structures and public procedures.

Throughout the policymaking process, a range of interest groups seek to influence outcomes. Lobbying in New Zealand is often characterised as small and fragmented, with limited publicly accessible data on interest groups and their activities available to researchers (Chapple & Anderson, 2018; Strong & Tyler, 2017; Unsworth, 2014; Walters, 2017). However, recent reports have highlighted lobbying practices, including allegations of privileged access and blurred boundaries between public and private roles (Espiner, 2023; Health Coalition Aotearoa, 2024), attracting public attention and concern. Nevertheless, the rules, norms, and conventions shaping policymaking still provide a basis for identifying patterns in how groups engage with decision-makers. As examined in this chapter, academic, practitioner, and journalistic sources consistently identify similar institutional access points and lobbying strategies. Together, these observations suggest that policy proposals follow identifiable pathways and that contextual characteristics shape their progression and eventual outcomes.

4.1.1 Chapter objectives, scope, and organisation

This chapter examines how policy influence is understood in New Zealand and identifies the key factors affecting lobbying outcomes by adapting the international frameworks discussed earlier to the New Zealand context. It outlines the principal institutional pathways, actors, and practices shaping policymaking, providing the context for analysing lobbying in New Zealand.

Achieving the above objectives requires engaging with a body of domestic scholarship that remains limited and dispersed compared with international research on interest groups. Research has not kept pace with the realities of interest group activity in New Zealand (Buckle, 2009; Strong & Tyler, 2017), and political theorists have tended to emphasise the role of politicians in shaping policy over that of public opinion or organised interests (Buckle, 2009). Earlier work noted “very little literature” on lobbying in New Zealand (see M. Malone, 2004, p. 17), and this scarcity has persisted in subsequent years (Strong & Tyler, 2017).

More recently, as the lobbying industry has grown in scale and sophistication, it has attracted increased scrutiny from investigative media and non-governmental organisations, particularly regarding transparency and the movement of former public servants into lobbying roles and vice versa (Edwards, 2017; Espiner, 2023; Health Coalition Aotearoa, 2024). Nevertheless, the review of the literature conducted for this thesis shows that an academic gap persists, with researchers continuing to highlight the lack of accessible public data necessary for comprehensive and systematic analysis.

To develop a comprehensive account of the context in which interest groups operate, this chapter draws on a wide range of sources. The academic work reviewed spans politics, public policy, and public relations and includes studies examining institutional features such as the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system and their implications for policymaking. This material is complemented by practitioner commentary, media investigations, and anti-corruption reports that provide insight into lobbying practice and access dynamics. These sources are examined through the three-factor framework introduced earlier in this thesis, focusing on institutional, organisational, and issue-based determinants of influence.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 4.2 reviews existing research on interest groups and lobbying in New Zealand, outlining the composition of the lobbying community and clarifying how different actor types are positioned within the policy arena. Section 4.3 then examines how New Zealand’s policymaking environment has been characterised in academic, practitioner, and public discourse, assessing the extent to which pluralist assumptions about access and competition are supported and, in doing so, providing a basis for the analytical

approach introduced in Chapter One (Section 1.3.3). Section 4.4 considers how influence has been assessed in New Zealand case research and establishes lobbying success as the basis for the measure adopted in this thesis. Drawing on the three-factor framework introduced in Chapter Two (Section 2.3), Section 4.5 applies these dimensions to the New Zealand context by mapping institutional access points, interest group resources and strategies, and relevant issue characteristics. Section 4.6 concludes the chapter by synthesising these insights and signalling the transition to the next chapter's examination of LGNZ as the focal actor of the empirical analysis.

4.2 The state of interest groups and lobbying in New Zealand

Interest groups shape New Zealand public policy (Grey, 2015; Kent, 1999; Mitchell, 1993; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Lobbying, the avenue through which they participate in the policymaking process, is considered a "legitimate activity" and an indication of the "machinery of democracy in action" (Kent, 1999, pp. 6 & 9; Walker, 2014). Like other policy actors, interest groups are expected to operate within the established rules of the policy process. In 2003, the then Education Minister Trevor Mallard emphasised this point at a seminar hosted by Four Winds Communications, a Wellington-based lobbying firm: "So long as we all abide by the written and unwritten conventions and practices...and respect each other's professional requirements, then we can all do our jobs better" (Beehive.govt.nz, 2003).

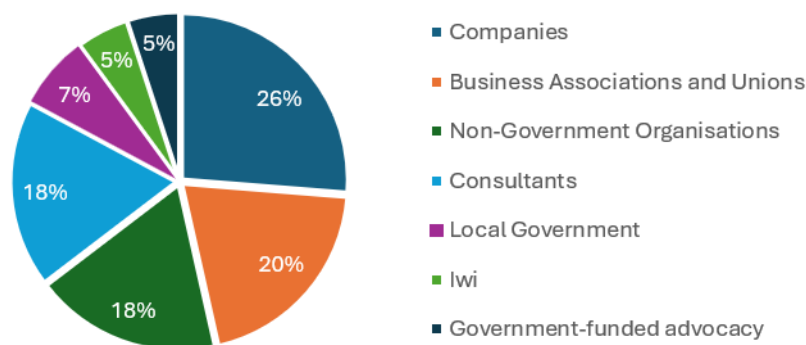
While viewed as small in scale, there are indications that the lobbying industry in New Zealand is expanding (Edwards, 2017). In 2015, the then Labour MP and Assistant Speaker Trevor Mallard noted that lobbying had grown steadily during his time in Parliament. He predicted it would continue to expand, becoming both more common and more sophisticated as a practice (cited in Tyler, 2015). Recording the access cards to the Beehive issued between 2012 and 2017, Chapple and Anderson (2018) offered a rough indication that the number of people engaged in lobbying had risen from 12 to 41. According to more recent reporting by Radio New Zealand (2025), that number has now doubled to 80.

4.2.1 Who lobbies in New Zealand?

Earlier discussions have referred to interest groups collectively, but who exactly lobbies in New Zealand? In the absence of formal regulations and records, there is no definitive answer

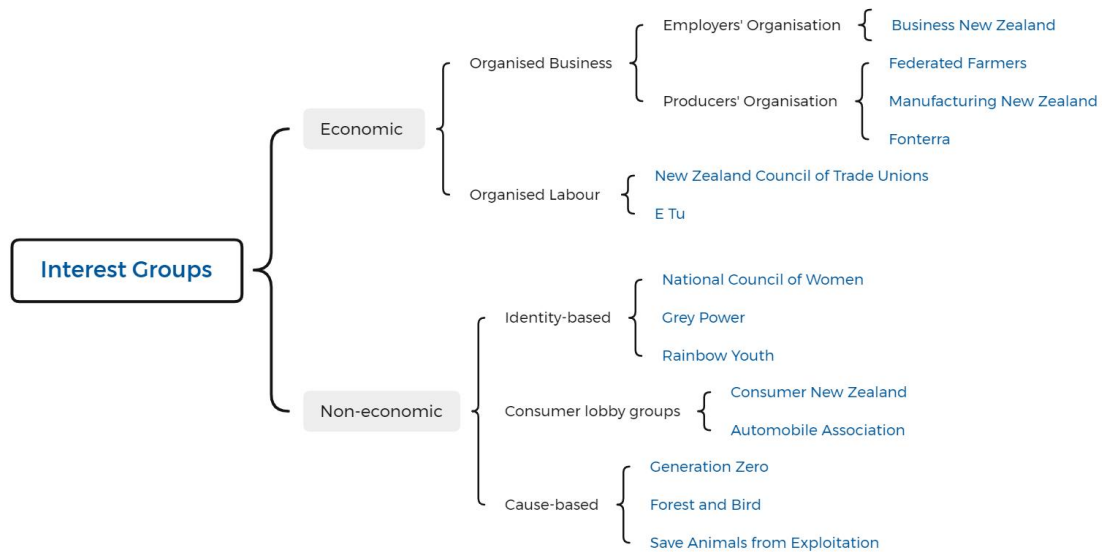
(Strong & Tyler, 2017; Unsworth, 2014). Nevertheless, some groups are recognised as key players in the New Zealand lobbying arena (Walters, 2017). These include major companies such as Air New Zealand, Vodafone, and Fonterra; business associations like Business NZ and the Employers and Manufacturers Association; trade unions such as the Council of Trade Unions, education unions, and E Tū; and sector-specific interest groups including Federated Farmers, the Insurance Council, and the Retirement Villages Association. Additionally, lobbying consultancies and law firms are known to represent companies and organisations for a fee. Chapple and Anderson’s (2018) data on lobbyists with access cards to Parliament broadly reflects this composition.

Figure 4-1 Who lobbies in New Zealand
data source: Unsworth (2014, p. 70)



Meanwhile, a poll conducted by Unsworth (2014) among lobbyists and Beehive staff suggests that community groups and non-government organisations (NGOs) also play a role. While not exact, his survey offers a useful indication of the relative presence of different group types within New Zealand’s lobbying landscape (see Figure 4-1 above). This also roughly resembles international estimates, particularly that of the European Union (Chapple & Anderson, 2018).

Figure 4-2 Topography of interest groups in New Zealand (with examples)
 adapted from Nicholls (2021, pp. 343-346)



Nicholls (2021) offers a systematic classification of interest groups in New Zealand according to which interest groups can be divided into economic and non-economic types (see Figure 4-2 above). Economic interest groups can be further sorted into those that represent business and workers. Business groups in particular hold a special weight in capitalist democracies like New Zealand that confer an advantage in the policy arena (Nicholls, 2021). Alternatively, Wood and Rudd (2004) categorised New Zealand interest groups into sectional and promotional types which, respectively, represent specific segments of the society (e.g., business and identity-based groups) or are constructed around ideologies (e.g., climate change).

4.3 Reviewing the discourse on pluralism in New Zealand

Chapter One positioned LGNZ as an interest group operating within a policy environment assumed to display broadly pluralist characteristics (see Section 1.3.3). This assumption provides an analytical starting point for this thesis and informs the use of theories of interest group influence developed in settings where multiple actors compete in shaping policy outcomes. The following discussion examines evidence on features associated with pluralist systems, including the openness of access to decision-making processes, the extent to which groups with differing resources have practical opportunities to participate in policymaking, and the uneven but dispersed distribution of influence among competing interest groups (Dahl, 1967).

Openness of access to decision-making

Veteran lobbyist Mark Unsworth (2014) contended that the unsuccessful attempt to implement the 2012 Lobbying Disclosure Bill was primarily influenced by international precedents established in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, rather than driven by local necessity. From his perspective as a professional within New Zealand’s lobbying sector, he observed that the concerns addressed by the bill were less pronounced in New Zealand, describing it as a “comparatively corruption-free society” (p. 68).

External evidence provides some support to the above perspective. International business advisory sources such as Gain Integrity (2020) have rated New Zealand favourably in terms of corruption risk. Since 2012, Transparency International has consistently ranked New Zealand among the least corrupt countries in the world, placing it at or near the top of the index in most years (see Table 4-1 below). These rankings are based on corruption perceptions gathered from experts and businesspeople and assess factors such as undue influence on law-making, the capture of state institutions by narrow interests, the use of public office for private gain, and citizen and media access to information (Transparency International, 2020).

Table 4-1 New Zealand CPI score since 2012

source: Transparency International New Zealand Chapter

Year	CPI Score	Rank	Notes
2024	83	4	After Singapore, Denmark, and Finland.
2023	85	3	After Denmark and Finland
2022	87	2	After Denmark
2021	88	1	Tied with Denmark and Finland
2020	88	1	Tied with Denmark
2019	87	1	Tied with Denmark
2018	87	2	After Denmark
2017	89	1	Followed by Denmark
2016	90	1	Tied with Denmark
2015	91	1	Tied with Denmark
2014	91	2	After Denmark
2013	91	1	Tied with Denmark
2012	91	1	Tied with Denmark and Finland

Notably, while New Zealand consistently ranks within the world’s top five, Table 4-1 also indicates that the country’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score has exhibited a downward trend since 2012. The watchdog attributed the country’s downward shift to concerns over political donations, lobbying transparency, and the movement of individuals

between government and lobbying roles (Transparency International, 2026). While these issues do not constitute traditional corruption, they concern influence, access, and transparency, shaping perceptions of integrity within the political system. It is also important to emphasise that these rankings reflect perceived, rather than actual, instances of corruption.

More recently, Health Coalition Aotearoa (2024) has noted a growing list of lobbying-related incidents that raise questions about transparency and fairness. These include smear campaigns, preferential access in exchange for favours, employment of lobbyists within government, and the rapid transition of former public servants into lobbying roles. A series of media investigations identified other controversial practices, such as publicly funded organisations hiring lobbying firms for political intelligence, close ties between lobbyists and senior officials, and allegations that lobbyists were directly involved in shaping policy (Espiner, 2023). Estimates also suggest that paid lobbyists made up around 20 percent of the interest group industry in recent years (Jacobson, 2023). Amid these concerns, calls to regulate lobbying have resurfaced, cautioning that New Zealand's informal approach carries risks of undue influence over public decision-making (Health Coalition Aotearoa, 2024; Yasbek, 2024). However, the scope of these questionable practices remains uncertain, and the reports stop short of concluding that such behaviour is widespread or dominates the policymaking process.

Participation by groups of differing resources

Despite economic interest groups often holding greater material resources such as funding, expertise, and organisational capacity, Marquez (2021) argues that these advantages do not automatically determine policy outcomes. He characterises New Zealand's relatively open political system, in which interest groups can readily form and access the state, as broadly consistent with a pluralist model of power. Within this framework, differences in resources shape how groups participate in policymaking, particularly their capacity to organise, gather evidence, and sustain engagement, but they do not guarantee consistent dominance. While some groups may enjoy greater access than others, no small set of actors, "not even well-funded business interests consistently get their way" (p. 73).

Former National MP Annabel Young (2003) contends that in the New Zealand policymaking environment, disadvantaged groups can still fight for and achieve success. Suggesting that the policy process can be responsive to those with fewer resources if they can compensate with other strengths like technical expertise, she wrote, “success will come to the highly paid professional and the passionate unpaid amateur” (p. 123). Former Green MP Holly Walker (2014) agrees that while New Zealand’s policymaking process is not immune to preferential treatment, the public still has a comparatively stronger chance of being heard here than in countries like the United States or the United Kingdom. Optimistic views can also be found in local government policy: Wallis and Dollery (2000), after reviewing the 1990s local government reforms, concluded that the business-led coalition was not fully successful in turning their policy preferences into law, largely due to the vigorous counter-lobbying efforts of local government associations and local authorities.

Uneven but dispersed distribution of influence

New Zealand enjoys a strong reputation for institutional integrity. It has also undergone an electoral system reform that is generally considered as having enhanced Parliament’s responsiveness to a broader range of interests (more of this in Section 4.5.1). Does this mean that interest groups have equal opportunities to influence public policy? Journalist Olivia Wannan (2021) highlighted the overall fairness of New Zealand’s policymaking process, noting that it generally accommodates input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders on new laws and policies. Another journalist, Laura Walters (2017) reported the absence of any interest group in New Zealand comparable to the powerful lobbying entities present in the United States.

However, some interest groups may have greater access to politicians and officials than others, depending on factors such as connections, resources, or their ability to present a more organised stance (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Like most capitalist societies, the interests of those who control the means of production often prevail, if not immediately, at least in the long term (Marquez, 2021). International studies do suggest that businesses tend to hold more lobbying power than civil society and even governments (De Bruycker & Beyers, 2019; Yackee & Yackee, 2006). Similar views have been made about New Zealand (e.g., Grey, 2015; Nicholls, 2021; Roper, 2006; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Bullock (2012) provides a case-specific

example, claiming that business and farming lobbies had an unhealthy influence over the 2009 Climate Change Response Amendment Act, which contributed to significant delays in implementing their sectors' obligations under the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

Is New Zealand a pluralist society?

Researchers such as Buckle (2009) explicitly describe New Zealand as a “pluralistic democracy,” while others, like Shaw and Eichbaum (2011), argue that it is predominantly but imperfectly pluralistic. Mulgan and Aimer (2013) specifically note that much of interest group activity in New Zealand reflects a form of pluralism. There are critics like Grey (2015, p. 462), who argues that New Zealand is moving away from its reputation as “an exemplar of pluralism in action” towards a form of political elitism that marginalises civil society in decision-making. However, Grey also notes that civil society actors resist this perceived marginalisation:

[T]hat does not mean that citizens, interest groups, community and iwi organisations, and grassroots lobbies accept the elite dictate that they are irrelevant to public debate. They work daily to reclaim space for civil society in public debate and policymaking, knowing that this means better policies and a stronger society. (p. 467).

Most of the literature on interest group influence in New Zealand public policy is framed from a broadly pluralist perspective (Roper, 2006). Although this body of work is somewhat dated due to limited scholarly activity, it arguably remains relevant. More recent studies that offer some critique of this pluralist framework do not argue a dramatic shift away from it or a move towards corporatism or elite capture. Instead, emerging research emphasises reforms designed to preserve balance and uphold New Zealand's democratic reputation, including measures such as regulation of lobbying practices.

In summary, whether New Zealand is a pluralistic society remains debated. However, this analysis of various observers of and participants in policymaking from different professional and political backgrounds suggests that interest groups in New Zealand are generally better able to advance their agendas than those in many other major Western democracies and that, were it to be placed along de Witte & Laffin's (2018) pluralist–corporatist continuum introduced in Section 1.3.3, New Zealand would be positioned near the pluralist end. This

matters for this thesis because it determines which factors of interest group influence to consider; in a system characterised by competition among many groups, different factors of interest group influence are more relevant than in one where only a chosen few have access to decision-makers. In New Zealand, interest group activity remains strong and well-supported, with decision-making influenced not only by economic resources but also by the strength, diversity, resourcefulness, and persistence of these groups (Buckle, 2009). While this thesis mainly examines formal avenues and strategies for lobbying, it acknowledges that informal and even undue advantages also exist outside this scope, which some actors may hold through wealth, personal networks, insider knowledge, or professional lobbying.

4.4 Measuring interest group influence in New Zealand research

Lobbying does not have an official definition in New Zealand from which this thesis might base a measure of influence (Tyler, 2015). However, governance researcher Simon Chapple notes that interest groups often lobby to block new ideas (cited in Wannan, 2021). Shaw and Eichbaum (2011) further suggest that interest groups also promote policy alternatives in response to government proposals. While interest groups can also play a proactive role in agenda-setting and policy development, their influence is most visible during formal policy decision-making stages. The influence of an interest group can thus be observed by how much a policy proposal evolves as it progresses from bill to law, and by the extent to which the outcome aligns with the group's interests—whether by removing undesirable provisions or incorporating those it supports.

Several New Zealand case studies adopt the same criteria in evaluating the influence of a particular interest group. For example, Bullock (2012) concluded that Federated Farmers was largely successful in its work on the 2009 Climate Change Response Amendment Act, based on the inclusion of provisions delaying the entry of the agriculture sector into the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and rendering the allocation of free emission units less retrospective by discounting the sector's past impact into the computation. Influence was also attributed to Federated Farmers when the then Labour Government abandoned its proposed agricultural emissions research levy in 2003 (Mersham et al., 2009). Drage (2016) reached the same verdict about LGNZ and local authorities when central government abandoned a proposal in the 2016 Local Government Amendment Act (No. 2) that would have allowed the

Local Government Commission (LGC) to create any new Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) without seeking the agreement of councils or communities.

These examples reflect an approach to assessing influence consistent with the outcome-based measure adopted in this thesis. The researchers evaluated influence through observable changes in policy content or the extent to which final decisions aligned with the stated interests of the group concerned. By focusing on whether policy proposals were amended, abandoned, or left unchanged in ways favourable to organised interests, this strand of New Zealand research illustrates how lobbying success through legislative outcomes can serve as a practical indicator of influence.

4.5 Applying the three-factor framework to New Zealand context

Recall from Chapter Two (Section 2.6) that interest group influence is shaped by three factors: institutional, organisational, and issue characteristics. Institutional factors relate to government structures, consultation rules, and decision-making processes that determine access to policymaking. Organisational factors include an interest group's resources and lobbying strategies. Issue-based factors pertain to a policy proposal's stakeholder dynamics, level of opposition, and public interest. In New Zealand, Wood and Rudd (2004) argue that an interest group's influence depends on its resources and the policy environment, a contention that aligns with broader international findings.

4.5.1 Policy institutions

Buckle (2009) contends that much of an interest group's behaviour and influence in New Zealand is determined by its access to decision-makers, including the contacts, relationships, and platforms through which policy preferences and arguments are communicated. The presence and availability of these channels are determined by institutional arrangements surrounding the New Zealand policymaking process. Written and unwritten rules "prescribe rights, roles, and responsibilities" and "regulate relationships between the various parts of government, and between the government and citizens" (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). A closer look at these institutions will thus allow for some conjectures to be formed on how public policy is decided, who decides it, who an interest group must therefore lobby, and how these decision-makers can be engaged effectively.

Former Green MP Holly Walker (2014) observes “New Zealand to have a relatively open and accessible Parliament, and approachable MPs” (p. 63), and across academic, lobbying, and political circles, there is some agreement on these two key points. First, New Zealand’s formal policy process offers multiple access points for citizen participation, whether individually or collectively (Grey, 2015; Kent, 1999; Young, 2003). These include select committees, Royal Commissions, and electoral clinics. This accessibility is reflected in an infographic titled “How a Bill Becomes Law,” available on the Parliament.nz (see Figure 2-1). Second, policymakers in New Zealand are generally approachable (Kent, 1999; Unsworth, 2014; Walker, 2014; Young, 2003). As Unsworth (2014) explains:

We don’t treat [Members of Parliament] like gods as happens in other countries, and, apart from the prime minister, they nearly always travel without a security presence...They are all resourced to have a staffed electorate office, and staff in Parliament to take calls and requests. A meeting with a local MP is not generally difficult to arrange (p. 68).

However, the right of citizens to collectively participate in the policymaking process in New Zealand has not gone unchallenged. During the peak of public choice rhetoric in the 1980s and 1990s, interest groups were increasingly framed as vested interests that should be excluded from policy decisions (Grey, 2015; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). During this period, the Fourth Labour Government implemented a ‘blitzkrieg’ approach to large scale reforms, including in local government. This government prioritised rapid implementation over consultation and limited opportunities for opposition, including from local government associations, to influence the reform process (Wallis & Dollery, 2000). The reorganisation, which has been regarded as one of the lowest points in New Zealand’s central–local government relations, dramatically reduced the number of local authorities from 850 to just 86 regional and territorial bodies (Drage, 2016).

Public discontent with the Government’s unchecked power during this period led voters to support the shift in 1996 from First Past the Post (FPP) to Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) representation, aiming to make future governments more responsive to public preferences (Cooke, 2021; Grey, 2015). The introduction of MMP expanded parliamentary pathways for

interest groups to engage in the policy process (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). It even brought into the system explicitly ideology-based organisations, for instance ACT and the Green Party.

With MMP, the rules of the game around lobbying have changed considerably (Palmer & Hill, 2002). Regarded as a “major departure from the Westminster model”, the establishment of MMP led to “second-order consequences” in the architecture of the Cabinet and political party systems in New Zealand (Shaw, 2021a, p. 252). For instance, the political executive’s grip on Parliament has loosened. Existing parliamentary access points became more favourable for lobbying, and new avenues opened through coalition or support parties whose policy positions may align more closely with an interest group.

Barrie Saunders, a former Labour Party’s press secretary, suggested that the introduction of MMP allowed influence to be distributed among various interest groups (cited in Scherer, 2008). Shaw and Eichbaum (2011) also discussed how MMP transformed politics, opening up new opportunities for these groups:

The line separating insider and outsider groups is a little more fluid [since the transition to MMP] ... governments now have strong incentives to listen to groups they might previously have been inclined to ignore. For insider groups, this may simply increase the absolute number of points at which they can exert pressure. For groups better used to being on the outside looking in, however, MMP has created new opportunities for making a difference. (p. 196)

MMP has incentivised legislators and public officials to consider interest groups’ policy positions when evaluating policy options (Mulgan & Aimer, 2013). This structural change made it possible for interest groups to influence policy outcomes by influencing the players through Parliament, political parties, government, select committees, and government officials. The following subsections discuss these channels in more detail.

4.5.1.1 Parliament

Compared to how the political executive operated under FPP, parliaments have become stronger under MMP (R. Malone, 2009). No political party can treat the legislature as a rubber

stamp and insist that bills pass unchanged, as the British government often does (Mitchell, 1993, p. 99). The effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) in New Zealand recorded between 1946 and 2008 corroborates Malone’s findings of the changing dynamics between the legislative and executive branches of government after MMP (see Table 4-2 below). ENPP is a formula developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) to measure the relative strength of political parties in Parliament. When parliamentary seats are distributed more evenly among parties, the ENPP is closer to the actual number of parties represented in Parliament. Table 4-2 shows that on average, there were effectively two parties in parliament—Labour and National—before the electoral rules were changed. Upon the introduction of MMP in 1996, succeeding parliaments have resembled a multiparty system.

Table 4-2 Effective number of parliament parties, before and after MMP
source: Buckle (2009, p. 41)

Election year	ENPP
1946–1993 (FPP)	1.95 (avg.)
1996	3.76
1999	3.44
2002	3.76
2005	2.98
2008	2.78

Laakso and Taagepera (1979) designed ENPP based on the concept of “effective access,” which the interest group literature describes as the likelihood that government decision-makers will consider a group’s interests when making decisions (see Truman, 1951, p. 506). In essence, ENPP identifies the number of political parties that influence the decision-making process, allowing interest groups to strategically target their lobbying efforts with an expectation of impact.

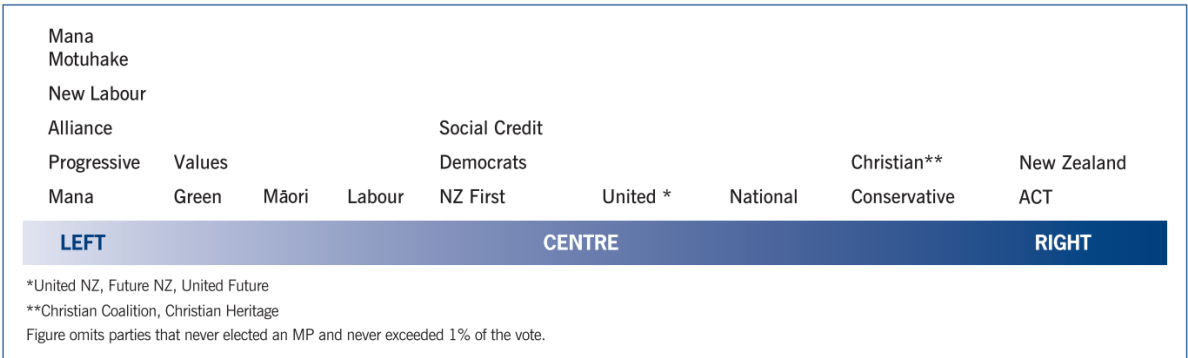
The strengthening of Parliament under MMP and the increase in the effective number of parliamentary parties have implications for how interest group influence is understood in this thesis, as they have enabled a relatively dispersed distribution of decision-making authority compared with the earlier FPP period. From the perspective of lobbyists, this implies that their influence may depend on engaging with multiple actors rather than with a dominant governing party. The concept of effective access reflected in a larger ENPP is relevant to the institutional dimension of the analytical framework used in this thesis, as it suggests that the

support of a wider range of political parties may be necessary for organised interests such as LGNZ to achieve favourable policy outcomes.

4.5.1.2 Political parties

During the FPP era, New Zealand operated under what Aimer (2015) described as a “suppressed multiparty system” rather than a true two-party system (p. 205): while National and Labour dominated Parliament, a significant portion of voters supported alternative political parties. The same author predicted that, as New Zealand’s political ideology and cleavage structure evolved under MMP, a multiparty system of five or six parties would emerge competing for parliamentary seats and forming governing blocs with either National or Labour. In addition to the centre-right National and centre-left Labour parties, potential parties included a “left-wing Green party, a libertarian right-wing party, a Māori party, and a populist, socially conservative party” (p. 206). The introduction of MMP has expanded the ideological spectrum, creating space for the inclusion of parties both more progressive than Labour and more free market than National (see Figure 4-3 below). The rise of political parties like the Green and Māori Parties represent environmental and social cleavages in New Zealand society. Other parties have held links to specific lobby groups such as New Zealand First to Grey Power, or United Future to the hunting and fishing lobby. Consequently, placing these parties along the traditional left–right spectrum is complex and can be inaccurate.

Figure 4-3 Left-right ordering of political parties in New Zealand in 2012
source: Nagel (2012, p. 5)



4.5.1.3 Governments

New Zealand has a Cabinet system of government. The Cabinet is composed of 20 Ministers who are drawn from the party or parties that form the majority in the House. The Cabinet directs the executive branch and makes decisions on government policy. However, it does not

formulate government policies in a bubble (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). The outcome of the policy process is influenced by many factors including the nature of the issue, the political context surrounding the issue, and the network of actors that may have interest or influence over the Cabinet's consideration of the matter.

New Zealand's shift from FPP to MMP has formed governments that tend to be more responsive to external interests. Under FPP, a highly disciplined, single-party majority government was the norm in New Zealand (Malone, 2021). The concentration of power within the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and the bureaucracy "insulate[s] policymaking from outside influence" (Stone, 2013, p. 42). Governments under FPP drew parliamentary majorities and Cabinet ministers from a single caucus and were therefore in a relatively strong position to remain committed to their legislative agenda (Buckle, 2009). Easton (2013, p. 27) described FPP governments as a "virtual dictatorship", restrained only by the next election or the unlikely possibility of dismissal by Parliament during the term. Such governments had considerable control over which groups were invited into the policymaking process:

New Zealand's majoritarian [FPP] political system has enhanced the discretion of decision-makers as to whom they wish to involve in consultation and negotiation ... Cabinet's unequivocal power has meant that it has not had to consult, let alone negotiate, except where the government wants to legitimate its action, to gain information, and/or to simplify the policy implementation process. (Boston, Levine, Mcleay & Roberts 1996, p. 161)

In contrast, coalition governments characteristic of the MMP electoral system, whether minority or majority, are generally more vulnerable to influence in the House than single-party majority governments (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011), with a blitzkrieg approach to policymaking becoming less feasible (Easton, 2013). Scholars largely agree that MMP has diluted executive power in New Zealand by ending the era of single-party governments exclusively contested between National and Labour (Buckle, 2009; R. Malone, 2009, 2021; Martin, 2021; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011; Young, 2003). Under MMP, it is far less likely for one party to control Parliament (Young, 2003). In fact, since the first MMP election in 1996 through to the 2017 elections, governments have typically relied on coalition or support

agreements with other parties (see Table 4-3 below). The Labour Party's outright majority win in the 2020 elections was an exception to this pattern (R. Malone, 2021).

Table 4-3 Types of government under MMP

source: Malone (2021, p. 153)

Formed in	Government type	Governing parties	Support/cooperation parties
1996	Coalition majority	National, NZ First	-
1998	Coalition minority	National, Independents	Independents
1999	Coalition minority	Labour, Alliance	Greens
2002	Coalition minority	Labour, Progressive	United Future
2005	Coalition minority	Labour, Progressive	United Future, NZ First
2008	Single-party minority	National	ACT, United Future, Māori Party
2011	Single-party minority	National	ACT, United Future, Māori Party
2014	Single-party minority	National	ACT, United Future, Māori Party
2017	Coalition minority	Labour, NZ First	Greens
2020	Single-party majority	Labour	Greens
2023*	Coalition majority	National, ACT, NZ First	-
<i>* Researcher's update</i>			

What does a multiparty government mean for policymaking and lobbying? Based on the large proportion of government bills enacted relative to members' bills,¹ the executive still dominates the legislative agenda (see Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011, p. 67). Having said that, former Prime Minister Helen Clark, who led three successive terms of coalition government (1999–2008), learned that not having too prescriptive a legislative programme of government is key to maintaining an effective relationship with partners and supporters from other parties (Electoral Commission NZ, 2021). Malone (2008) also found that the necessity for coalitions under MMP has allowed smaller political parties to bind to or prevent the government from introducing certain legislation and has put them into a better position to obtain the government's commitment to their own legislative agendas. For instance, National and New Zealand First included in their 1996 coalition agreement a range of policies that required Acts of Parliament to take into effect (R. Malone, 2009).

While the government still determines most of the policies for deliberation under MMP, it cannot simply expect that every piece of legislation will get through the House unscathed (R. Malone, 2021; Shaw, 2021b; Young, 2003). With multiparty governments, every policy decision must be made with the assurance that enough parties will support the government

¹ Government bills are introduced by ministers as part of the government's legislative programme, while members' bills are introduced by non-executive MPs and are selected via ballot for consideration.

on the issue. Failure to ensure commitment to a bill among coalition parties means risking time and resources on a policy proposal that may not have majority support from the House (R. Malone, 2008). As Helen Clark noted with respect to the political reality that emerged from 25 years of MMP in New Zealand:

[I]f you are in coalition or a confidence and supply agreement with other parties, you cannot just go and dump legislation or policy decisions on them without discussion, input, broad consultation, and there was a lot of that, there were meetings from time to time between party leaders in supporting the government. (Electoral Commission NZ, 2021)

During such cross-party consultations, the government must be open to negotiating and making concessions to its coalition partners or support allies in the legislation it wishes to advance through the policy process (R. Malone, 2021; Shaw, 2021b). As a result, governments under MMP has a wider range of perspectives and sources of advice to consider than what was usual under the FPP single-party majority governments of the past. Points of view considered are not only limited to those of other political parties but also come from “the constellation of interest groups and stakeholders that hover around those parties” (Shaw, 2021b, p. 324).

4.5.1.4 Select committee

Select committees, whose strength is observed to be unusual for a parliamentary system derived from the Westminster model (Mcleay, 2001), have been described as “the best-kept secret” of New Zealand's parliamentary system (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011, p. 57). Reflecting on the difference between the legislative select committee system of New Zealand with that of the United Kingdom, the home of the Westminster model, Mitchell (1993) wrote that in New Zealand,

committees are all select committees but have the power to enquire and also to hold hearings on legislation before settling down to the standing committee routine of going through a bill in detail. This provides New Zealand MPs with a satisfying role, strengthens Parliament by bringing it into dialogue with the world outside, and makes

for legislation which is better understood and better accepted and, often enough, just better. So instead of being a noisy irrelevance, Parliament is moved back to centre stage to do its traditional job of telling government what the people want. (p. 92)

In their research, Mitchell (1993) raised two important points about the New Zealand select committee system. First, substantial changes in a legislative bill can and often do take place at the select committee stage. While select committee recommendations are not binding on the House, amendments are almost invariably adopted (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). In fact, a greater number of amendments to a legislative bill are usually reached in a select committee than in a House deliberation. Malone (2009) portrayed the House as a battleground where government bills are typically attacked by the opposition and defended by the government. In contrast, select committees offer a forum where legislators of different ideologies can engage in more rational scrutiny of legislation. Additionally, Shaw and Eichbaum (2011) emphasised the important role external actors play in enhancing the overall positive impact that the select committee process has on public policy in New Zealand:

While the political action which takes place in the chamber can affect parties' morale and the prospects of individual Ministers and MPs, it is often highly choreographed and may have relatively little bearing on the content of the policy. Committees, though, can make a substantial difference to policy. Crucially, they usually do so with the active assistance of a wide range of people from beyond the parliamentary complex, including interest groups, representatives of union and business organisations, and individuals who want their points of view heard. (p. 57)

This observation aligns with Mitchell's second point that select committees serve as one of Parliament's connections to the outside world and vice versa. These committees call for public submissions and hold public hearings where groups and individuals can speak in support of their written submissions. Taking these contributions into consideration, the committee members then prepare a report to the House recommending whether a bill should proceed or otherwise. If the bill is to move forward, the select committee may recommend technical and substantive changes which are almost certain to be adopted by the House for deliberation. With a few exemptions, virtually all bills also go to a select committee after their

first reading (R. Malone, 2009). Such automatic referral to legislative committees is not common in many countries, excluding the public from the legislative process (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011).

Select committees were highly valued even under FPP (R. Malone, 2009; Palmer & Palmer, 1997). They were regarded as “a crucial bastion of democracy in the legislative process” (Burrows & Joseph, 1990, p. 306) and “a de facto second chamber” (R. Malone, 2009, p. 12). Ministers do not sit on subject select committees, a convention that started during the FPP era, and this independence allows New Zealand select committees to modify and shape legislation in a way that is impossible for their kin in the United Kingdom (Mitchell, 1993).

That said, Mitchell (1993) noted the majority held by governments under FPP served as a reliable recourse in pushing its legislative agenda through. In keeping with their majority in the House, FPP governments had the majority on each subject select committee. This meant that the committees’ recommendations typically remained aligned with the decision of the caucus and, by implication, the Cabinet (R. Malone, 2009). Government backbenchers also chaired committees, a link through which ministers were able to influence the committees. Overall, the operation of the select committee was not entirely independent of the executive under FPP.

Two outcomes of MMP that significantly contributed to the independence of select committees from the executive were identified by Malone (2009). First, it became possible for non-Government MPs to be appointed as committee chairs. For instance, during the 48th Parliament (2005–2008) three of the 13 select committees were chaired by Labour’s support parties—the Greens and New Zealand First—while the opposition National Party held two. The rest were chaired by Labour backbenchers. Non-government committee chairs are less susceptible to the pressures of abiding by the government’s policy agenda and timetable than a government backbencher chair.

Another feature of MMP that promotes the independence of select committees is that MMP governments no longer have automatic majorities on these committees. Buckle (2009) observed that since the introduction of MMP, committee membership, being proportional to

party representation in the House, has resulted in split committees and government minorities (see Table 4-4). The dilution of executive control over select committees has been amplified by the increase in the total number of MPs in Parliament (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Since 1996, select committees have expanded in size (from 5–7 to 6–13 members), reducing the likelihood that governing parties hold a majority without support from other MPs.

Table 4-4 Balance of power in subject select committees

source: Buckle (2009)

Election year	Government majorities	Split committees	Government minorities
1996	0	12	0
1999	1	10	2
2002	1	2	10
2005	0	3	10
2009	5	2	6
2017*	5	8	1
2020*	11	1	0
2023*	8	4	1
<i>* Researcher's update</i>			

Overall, select committees have become more important and influential under MMP (Buckle, 2009; Palmer & Palmer, 1997). As Tanner (2004) puts it, “no longer do bills emerge silently from the bureaucracy and pass relatively unscathed through a sympathetic legislature” (p. 18). When a government lacks a majority in a select committee and on the House floor, the compromises that ensure safe legislative passage sometimes results in bills that are “battered beyond recognition” (p. 9). Consequently, ministers have to “work harder and be more flexible as to the content of their bills” (R. Malone, 2008, p. 168).

Sceptics of the value of the role played by select committees under MMP include Tim Clarke, who leads public policy and regulation at the Russell McVeagh law firm. Clarke, (cited in Buckle, 2009, p. 87) opined that,

yes, [select committees] are leading to greater scrutiny; yes, they are leading to greater opportunity for pressure groups; and yes, pressure groups are obtaining amendments through the select committee stage that aren't necessarily desired by the government or the architects of the legislation. But, no, the full capacity and

independence of select committees have not yet been achieved. I do not think it [the role of select committees] is anywhere near as significant and important as the architects of MMP and constitutional experts thought that it would be.

The characteristics of the select committee system outlined in this subsection are directly relevant to the institutional context shaping LGNZ's lobbying success examined in this thesis. Because select committees are a key site where legislation is scrutinised, amended, and opened to public submissions, they provide an important venue through which organised interests can seek to shape policy outcomes. The strengthened role select committees play under MMP and their engagement with external actors suggest expanded opportunities for groups such as LGNZ to present evidence, advocate positions, and influence legislative content. At the same time, however, mechanisms exist within the New Zealand policymaking process that may reduce the effectiveness of the select committee process. For example, invoking urgency can decrease the time allocated for public submissions and thorough examination. Additionally, during the Committee of the Whole House stage, a majority vote can undo recommendations made by the committee. Alongside the continuing role of party dynamics, such mechanisms for exerting government influence show that access to committees does not automatically translate into impact. The operation of select committees therefore illustrates how institutional arrangements, a key part of the analytical framework used to examine LGNZ's lobbying outcome, both enable and constrain lobbying.

4.5.1.5 Government officials

Ministers have a legal monopoly on decision-making, but this does not mean they act without advice (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). This advisory role is formally carried out by officials in government departments that conduct research and offer technical guidance at the direction of ministers and Cabinet. Staff within these departments frame policymaking by identifying for the ministers what policy options are feasible and otherwise (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). They also draft legislation and provide expertise to parliamentary committees. As such, these departments are a channel through which interest groups can influence decision-making. As Young (2003) implies, one of the ways interest groups may influence public decisions is to contribute the advice that goes into them. Kent (1999) believes that lobbyists are useful to

bureaucrats, and vice versa: “[I]n keeping with their role, good officials are privately delighted but officially very guarded when an effective lobbyist arrives on the scene” (p.43).

All government decision-making is serviced by officials who draft background papers setting out the policy issues and suggesting courses of action for the government’s consideration (Mulgan & Aimer, 2013). Senior officials frequently attend Cabinet committee meetings, where the detailed work in policy formulation takes place, to provide advice on different policy possibilities (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011, p. 80). While the loyalty of these officials is to the ministers and their department’s interests, their expertise is also available to other parties, including those in opposition, partly thanks to New Zealand’s pragmatic politics (Mitchell, 1993).

As noted, officials also work with select committees on legislative bills. They prepare departmental reports and assist in drafting the committee report to the House. In some cases, the select committee encourages these officials to consult with concerned groups in forming their advice. In the 2016 Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (No 2), for example, the select committee “resolved that our advisers could consult LGNZ [Local Government New Zealand] and SOLGM [Society of Local Government Managers] to inform their advice to us about the bill” (Local Government and Environment Committee, 2017, p. 2). In this way, many changes in a legislative proposal come from the recommendations of officials (Young, 2003) who, in turn, draw on external input.

The MMP system has brought about a “coalition or minority government environment in which the ‘apolitical’ public service operates has become more ‘political’, the processes of Parliament less predictable, and the activities of pressure groups more intense” (Martin, 2006, p. 142). Officials must be familiar with the policy agenda of more than one party (Kent, 1999) because, in a coalition government, they serve ministers from more than one party. According to Shaw (2021b), a professional and impartial public service still exists in New Zealand, where most public officials are committed to being politically neutral and providing candid and comprehensive advice. Shaw distinguishes public servants from ministerial advisers, arguing that the latter form a distinct partisan layer within executive government. Eichbaum (2021) describes the interaction between government officials and Ministers as

“speaking truth to power” (p. 298). The former has the constitutional mandate of providing evidence-based policy inputs needed but not necessarily welcomed by the government. Kent (1999) would have considered this circumstance an opportunity for interest groups to establish a productive relationship with government officials. Endorsing a point made by Sir Roger Douglas, a former Minister of Finance, she agreed that interest groups must position themselves as valued informants to whom officials can turn for independent, informed, and impartial advice. She added, “If you master the art of working closely with the Ministers’ advisors, then anything is possible” (p. 43).

These features of the advisory role of public servants in government departments are relevant to the institutional context examined in this thesis. Although ministers retain formal decision-making authority, the shaping of policy options, legislative drafting, and committee advice by officials creates additional points at which organised interests may seek to exert influence. Engagement with officials therefore represents a pathway through which groups such as LGNZ can contribute information, frame issues, or affect the advice that informs political decisions. At the same time, the norms of neutrality and professional independence within the public service mean that access does not automatically translate into favourable outcomes. The interaction between interest groups and officials thus illustrates another dimension of the opportunities and constraints embedded in the policymaking environment that this thesis considers when analysing lobbying outcomes.

4.5.2 Group resources and lobbying tactics

4.5.2.1 Resources

Wood and Rudd (2004) identified the following as resources that interest groups have leveraged to influence New Zealand public policy: membership size, sanctions (e.g., strikes), economic weight, public sympathy, and public standing (e.g., of religious groups). Resources used vary across interest groups. For example, organised labour leverages its numbers to threaten strikes and apply direct pressure, while organised business relies on its economic standing to make predictions about potential market disruption to exert pressure.

Wood and Rudd (2004) also identified legitimacy as a useful advocacy tool for interest groups. However, it is not as intrinsic to an interest group as the abovementioned resources. From

the viewpoint of the government and public officials, groups recognised as legitimate representatives of policy stakeholders are expected to be consulted, to submit their views on the legislation, and to be invited to advisory bodies. Representatives considered to be legitimate normally come from sectional groups which represent members bound by common identity or perform a similar economic activity. For example, the importance of the agricultural sector in the New Zealand economy has given Federated Farmers a relatively strong voice in policymaking. As we saw in Chapter Three (Section 3.5.2) regarding LGAs, legitimacy also springs from a group's supposed expertise on the policy issues that concern its members. Information, a resource not included in Wood and Rudd's otherwise comprehensive list, has become more valuable in an MMP environment and is considered alongside the aforementioned resources in this thesis's investigation of LGNZ's lobbying outcomes.

4.5.2.2 Lobbying tactics

In Chapter Two (Section 2.6.2), scholars have identified insider and outsider lobbying as two primary tactics that interest groups may use to achieve policy influence, and this subsection addresses each in turn.

Insider lobbying as the preferred tactic of interest groups

Insider lobbying relies on established political channels and is often regarded as more effective than outsider lobbying, which seeks to influence decision-makers indirectly through media campaigns, grassroots mobilisation, and public advocacy rather than direct engagement. Nicholls (2021) noted that interest groups in New Zealand typically utilise "conventional and well-established channels" to shape policymaking (p. 244). Other commentators suggest that working through direct engagement within the political system is generally preferred over indirect methods. Mersham, Theunissen, and Peart (2009) characterised lobbying in New Zealand as the "direct process of seeking to influence government policy and decision-making" (p. 185). This includes meeting with ministers, their advisers, and government officials; gathering and presenting information; making submissions; and appearing before select committees or inquiries. While participating in the formal political process, lobbyists build and maintain close relationships with legislators and bureaucrats to put pressure through informal connections.

According to journalist Louise Callan, advocates who effectively navigate formal processes—clearly articulating their policy preferences, gaining political attention, and directly engaging with decision-makers—are seen as more likely to achieve success in New Zealand’s policymaking environment (cited in Kent, 1999, p. 6). Some experts suggest that the choice of lobbying tactic in New Zealand depends on the resources available to a group. For instance, those with economic and political leverage are more inclined to engage directly with key decision-makers. Grey (2015) observed that sectional groups with insider status can exert influence throughout the policy cycle, reducing the need for public advocacy.

The shift to MMP is widely believed to have increased interest groups’ reliance on insider lobbying. Researchers examining interest group behaviour under MMP have suggested that the system has expanded institutional access, creating more opportunities for direct engagement with policymakers (Boston et al., 1996; Buckle, 2009; Redward, 1995; Sellens, 1998; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). These perspectives reflect a broader consensus that insider lobbying tactics remain the dominant and often more effective strategy for interest groups seeking to shape policy in New Zealand. The following paragraphs discusses key insider lobbying tactics, including providing information and advice, working with public officials, participating in the select committee process, and leveraging power at the margins.

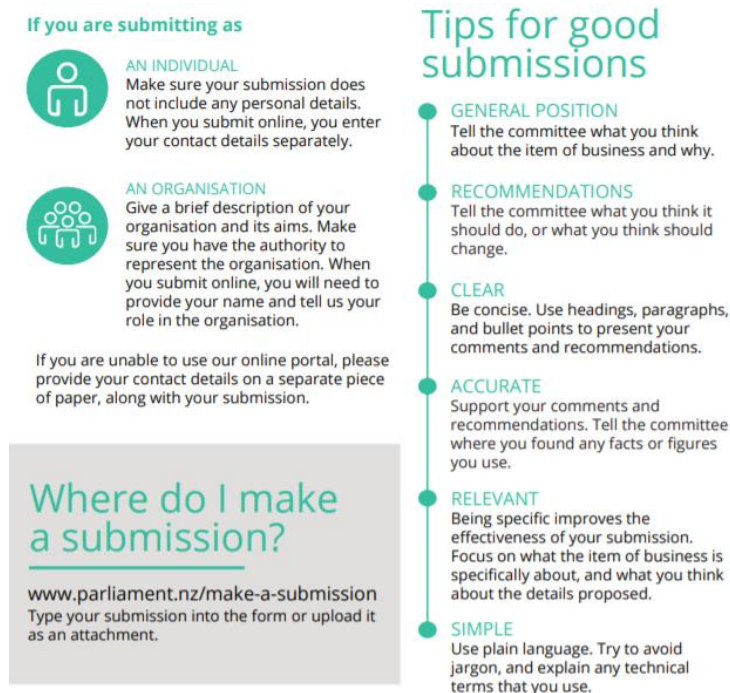
Providing information and advice. Palmer and Palmer (1997, p. 241) anticipated that information would be the “most effective weapon” of interest groups engaging in insider lobbying in an MMP environment, the transition to which introduced greater complexity in government decision-making, necessitating engagement with multiple actors such as ministers, coalition partners, and minor parties and increasing the value of credible and persuasive information (Peart & Macnamara, 1996). Young (2003) described information as the most powerful tool for influencing decisionmakers while Kent (1999) noted that research strengthens the credibility and effectiveness of lobbying efforts. Policymakers are more receptive to evidence-based recommendations than they are to ideological arguments, making empirical support crucial to the consideration of policy proposals, especially in an MMP system involving a diverse range of MPs (Peart & Macnamara, 1996).

As noted earlier, one of the key developments under MMP has been the increased importance of minor parties in shaping policy. Buckle (2009) posited that minor and non-government parties, now holding greater influence, often lack the research and technical resources available to ministers and government agencies. This creates a demand for reliable information, which interest groups can supply to strengthen their lobbying efforts. Illustrating how smaller political parties in particular can rely on information from interest groups to bolster their position in policy discussions, former Green MP Russel Norman acknowledged that submissions played a crucial role in his party's successful negotiations with the Labour Government on the 2007 Climate Change (Emissions Trading and Renewable Preference) Bill (cited in Buckle, 2009).

The way lobbying groups package information has been found to contribute to their policy influence in New Zealand. Young (2003) and Buckle (2009) highlighted the importance of interest groups tailoring information to the political audience and presenting their arguments in ways that align with policymakers' interests and priorities. Legal academic and former MP Sir Geoffrey Palmer suggested that an interest group's influence depends less on its political connections and more on its ability to craft proposals that Parliament can realistically adopt (cited in Palmer & Hill, 2002). He argued that interest groups that frame their positions within broader public interest considerations are more likely to be effective.

A practical approach to lobbying is to propose concrete amendments to legislation. Kent (1999) recommended that interest groups hire legal experts to draft specific clauses and subclauses for proposed amendments. This makes it easier for select committees to assess the feasibility of these recommendations and increases the likelihood of their adoption. The Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives having provided guidance on preparing submissions to select committees (see Figure 4-4 below) reinforces the importance of evidence-based policy proposals to the policymaking process. Many of the strategies outlined in this discussion—such as backing arguments with research, tailoring information to different audiences, and making clear legislative recommendations—align with both practical lobbying experience and academic insights into effective lobbying.

Figure 4-4 Tips for good submissions
source: Office of the Clerk (2020)



Working with public officials. In New Zealand’s MMP environment, working with public officials remains a critical insider lobbying tactic for interest groups. Boston et al. (1996, p. 149) predicted that “irrespective of the political complexions of governments under MMP, the role of the public service will be as vital as ever,” as it continues to serve as the primary source of candid advice to Cabinet. Buckle’s (2009) findings reinforced this prediction. Experts agree that the public service remains a central player in shaping policy and serves as “a critical relationship and point of access” for interest groups (Buckle, 2009, p. 92). Most interest groups in New Zealand continue to work closely with officials to advance their policy objectives. For instance, Elliott and Haigh (2012) found that organisations in their study actively engaged with officials through various channels, including by participating in government-sponsored consultations and advisory processes, making submissions to government agencies, contacting public servants and politicians, scheduling meetings to advocate for or oppose specific policies, and seeking government support for innovative projects. However, the shift to MMP has also made it more feasible for interest groups to influence policy without engaging directly with government officials or even in opposition to their views.

Participating in the select committee process. Select committees have become an increasingly important avenue for interest groups seeking to influence policymaking in New Zealand. Palmer and Palmer (1997) noted these committees offer a formal platform to present evidence and recommendations, and appearing before them is crucial. The introduction of MMP has further amplified this significance. Sellens (1998) observed that the wider political diversity within select committees under MMP, where smaller parties now play a more decisive role in select committee decisions, has generated ideological differences and internal disagreements that provide lobbyists with opportunities to exert influence. Former Green MP Russel Norman highlighted that minor parties often hold the deciding vote in select committees, making submissions from interest groups especially impactful (cited in Buckle, 2009). Likewise, former Labour MP Charles Chauvel, who chaired the select committee for the 2007 Climate Change Bill, attributed many of what he saw as improvements in the final bill to input received during the committee stage (cited in Buckle, 2009).

Leveraging power at the margins. Under MMP, interest groups have increasingly turned their attention beyond the government and its ministers, recognising the strategic value of engaging with other political parties in Parliament. Boston, Levine, and Roberts (1996) anticipated that interest groups would focus on coalition or supporting parties, particularly under minority governments, to secure influence over policy decisions, and Redward (1995) foresaw that, given the expected rise in private members' bills, it would become more relevant for interest groups to lobby opposition parties.

Buckle (2009) confirmed that under MMP, interest groups have expanded their political relationships, showing greater willingness to engage with parties outside the Executive. The system creates opportunities for groups to leverage "power at the margins," as smaller parties often hold the balance of power in passing legislation (p. 79). On the other hand, some experts have observed that lobbying opposition parties has been less effective than initially anticipated. For instance, former Prime Minister Helen Clark believes that bipartisan cooperation remains an exception rather than the norm in New Zealand politics (Electoral Commission NZ, 2021). She noted that while MMP has increased consultation between governing and supporting parties, cross-party negotiations remain limited, as they can be perceived as a sign of weakness for the ruling party.

Outsider lobbying as a secondary tactic

Former MP Trevor Mallard observed that interest groups also resort to outsider lobbying strategies, such as media campaigns, public demonstrations, and high-profile stunts, to attract public attention and influence policy. However, speaking from his experience as a policymaker, he placed greater emphasis on direct engagement within the policymaking process than on these forms of advocacy, stating that:

Lobbying frequently makes headlines, whether through media-driven stunts and protests or because of the outcomes of lobbying efforts, such as the legislation banning the ownership of dangerous dogs. Yet, the concept of lobbying is often misunderstood. Lobbying is a legitimate practice in a democracy. According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary, it involves seeking to influence legislators, advancing bills, or soliciting the support of key figures. (Beehive.govt.nz, 2003)

Mersham et al. (2009) maintain that the best time for outsider lobbying is only when formal gateways have failed because, while politicians may be attuned to seemingly popular causes in the media, they will also avoid the appearance of succumbing to public pressure.

Interest groups with the least access to government tend to be the noisiest (Wood & Rudd, 2004). Putting it more bluntly, Jesson (1992) wrote that confrontational approaches are for the “inexperienced and powerless” and usually prove to be a “pointless exercise” (p. 368). Elliot and Haigh (2012) found that lobbying groups primarily engage in insider as opposed to insider lobbying, avoiding radical actions such as protests or boycotts:

Most salient is that organisations are now far more likely to engage in institutional advocacy than take radical action. Most organisations never take part in demonstrations or rallies although several indicated that historically their protest activity was an important component of advocacy. Few now organise or promote boycotts or petitions or engage in other forms of direct action; although they have done so in previous times. (p. 11)

Taken together, these perspectives indicate that interest groups in New Zealand primarily pursue policy influence through insider channels, with formal institutional access, information exchange, and engagement with decision-makers forming the core of lobbying activity. Outsider strategies remain secondary and are typically deployed when insider access is limited or less effective, reinforcing the centrality of institutionalised engagement within the New Zealand policymaking process.

4.5.3 Issue characteristics

The New Zealand interest group literature has not given direct attention to issue characteristics as a factor influencing lobbying success. However, previous findings regarding the relevance of contentiousness and complexity as issue-based factors have been highlighted within the New Zealand context, and these two factors are discussed in the following subsections.

4.5.3.1 A highly contested policy decreases the likelihood of influence for a specific group

Chapter Two, Section 2.6.3 noted that an interest group will find it more challenging to lobby on highly contentious policy issues with competing interests than on those where a single, uncontested perspective is being promoted. Wallis and Dollery (2000) identified this challenge in the context of New Zealand's local government reforms in the 1990s, highlighting the tension between business-led groups and council representatives driven by their differing views on the role and scope of local authorities. Business-led groups advocated for a minimalist approach, emphasising that local governments should focus on core activities and reduce rates to enhance international competitiveness. They were particularly critical of councils expanding into non-traditional areas, arguing that such actions risked fiscal irresponsibility. In contrast, council representatives supported local governments taking a more proactive role, asserting that local governance was essential to addressing complex community needs. They believed that the reform should empower local government to engage more actively in social and economic development. The resulting legislation, the Local Government Amendment Act 1996, introduced additional accountability measures in response to business concerns while still allowing local government a proactive role if democratically supported. Ultimately, the authors found that neither interest group achieved complete success, resulting in a "stalemate" where local government policy remained

incrementally adjusted rather than radically transformed (p. 25). Examples like this justify consideration of the effect of issue contentiousness on the influence of LGNZ in this thesis.

4.5.3.2 A complex policy issue enhances a specific interest group's chances of influence

Chapter Two, Section 2.6.3 also explained that as an issue's technical complexity increases, decision-makers are more likely to seek input from specific actors. This was particularly applicable to some European local government associations which leverage technocratic advice to impact EU policymaking. In New Zealand, interest groups primarily sell ideas, communicating with decision-makers to ensure the policy preferences of those they represent are heard (Kent, 1999). However, rather than focusing on philosophical arguments, interest groups typically offer technical and specific knowledge that is highly relevant to the policymaking process. Recognising the importance of informed decision-making, policymakers generally give serious consideration to the views expressed by citizens (Palmer & Palmer, 1997). Former MP Walker (2014) acknowledged that parliamentarians need expert knowledge to make sound decisions, while another former MP, Young (2003), noted that many MPs are eager to receive as much information as possible: "MPs live in a vortex of information and ideas but they are still keen to acquire more useful information. Many MPs are information junkies" (p. 16).

A notable example of a citizen whose capacity to inform had a significant impact on New Zealand policy is James Fletcher, founder of Fletcher Holdings and "one of the most influential private citizens in New Zealand's political history" (Jesson, 1992, p. 367). Fletcher played a key role in the First Labour Government's state housing programme, forming close relationships with prominent politicians and officials to share his expertise and resources in housing, an area where the government lacked sufficient knowledge at the time (Jesson, 1992). As a result, "his participation was seen as a necessary feature in implementing policy" (p. 367). However, despite the significance of expert knowledge exemplified here, there is limited evidence to suggest that interest groups have succeeded in achieving their policy aims purely based on their expertise, rather than the connections they possess (Chapple & Anderson, 2018).

Overall, these examples suggest that issue characteristics should play an important role in shaping LGNZ's lobbying success. Highly contentious issues with competing interests tend to constrain the ability of interest groups to secure full policy gains, whereas technical complexity can create opportunities for influence by increasing decision-makers' reliance on specialised information. Given the limited New Zealand-based research on issue characteristics, this important yet underexplored dimension of lobbying outcomes warrants further examination.

4.6 Moving forward

A review of the discourse on interest groups influencing public policy in New Zealand shows a strong focus on participation in official processes, political relationships, and institutional access. Interest groups in New Zealand have long lobbied ministers and public officials, but the introduction and implementation of the MMP electoral system opened new institutional channels. Beyond engaging with the government, they can now also appeal to supporting and even opposition parties or work with select committees, all of which have gained greater relevance under this system. This review has also identified that, while relevant, less attention has been given to factors related to an interest group's resources or the characteristics of the policy issues being lobbied on.

At this stage, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of LGNZ as a national association and representative of local authorities; defined lobbying success—as used here, a proxy for influence—as the degree of alignment between articulated preferences and legislative outcomes; and outlined the institutional, organisational, and issue-specific factors that may be associated with success. This chapter has situated these concepts within New Zealand's MMP-era policymaking environment, highlighting the settings in which LGNZ seeks to advance collective local government interests. Moving from these conceptual and contextual foundations to systematic evaluation requires a clear methodological approach. The next chapter therefore sets out the research design used to assess these factors across multiple legislative cases and to examine their operation within a focused case study.

Examining LGNZ's lobbying success through documents, patterns, and narratives

5.1 Introduction

Given the challenges associated with studying interest group influence, mixed methods approaches have been used before to capture different dimensions of the phenomenon (Mahoney, 2007). This thesis also adopts a mixed methods approach. The specific design employed is a sequential explanatory design, one of the most used in mixed methods research, which involves collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data in two consecutive phases within one study (Creswell, 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The intent is to have one phase of the mixed methods study build on the other (Fetters et al., 2013).

Researchers adopting a sequential explanatory design must address several key methodological considerations (Creswell, 2003). One such consideration is the need to establish clear connections between the quantitative and qualitative phases and to integrate their respective findings. This thesis follows this approach by first outlining the research questions and then employing the most appropriate methods to answer each of those questions. The first and second research questions investigate the extent of LGNZ's lobbying success and identifies the organisational, institutional, and issue-based factors associated with that success through quantitative analysis. The third research question explores how these factors operate in practice within the New Zealand policymaking process through qualitative case study analysis. The research questions are logically linked: the first and second seek to provide a generalisable understanding of LGNZ's influence and its associated factors, and the third aims to explain these statistical relationships by examining the perspectives of actors involved in a specific policymaking process and its outcome. Subsequent sections of this chapter explain how the two phases are further connected, for example how quantitative findings inform case selection for the qualitative phase and the design of interview questions.

Further methodological considerations for the sequential explanatory research design relate to the priority given to the quantitative and qualitative phases and the order in which they are conducted (Creswell, 2003). Typically, the quantitative phase takes precedence and is conducted first, and a subsequent qualitative phase is used to interpret and elaborate on the initial findings (Doyle et al., 2016; Ivankova et al., 2006). Consistent with this logic, the first phase involves quantitative data collection and analysis to establish a generalisable understanding of LGNZ's influence and the factors associated with it. The second phase then undertakes qualitative data collection and analysis, drawing on the experiences of key actors involved in the development of a selected piece of legislation that LGNZ sought to influence to refine and explain the statistical results. Figure 5-1 summarises the overall research design adopted in this thesis.

Figure 5-1 Overview of the research design

	Phase	Procedure	Product
Hypothesis development	Hypothesis development	Literature review and content analysis linking the international and NZ literature, and LGNZ's lobbying practice	Hypotheses based on international theory, adapted to NZ and LGNZ contexts
Quantitative and qualitative phases	QUANTITATIVE data collection	- Document analysis - Transforming data coded into categories into numeric form - Tools: Nvivo software and Microsoft Excel	- Documentary evidence - Numeric data - Quantitative results
	QUANTITATIVE data analysis	- Frequencies - Chi-square test - Tool: SPSS software	- Descriptive statistics - Statistical associations
	Connecting quantitative and qualitative phases	- Choosing legislation on which LGNZ lobbied on using the statistical findings - Developing interview questions based on the statistical findings	- Case study - Interview protocol
	Qualitative data collection	- Individual, in-depth interviews - Content analysis	- Transcribed interviews - Researcher's notes - Documentary evidence
	Qualitative data analysis	- Coding and thematic analysis - Tool: Nvivo software	- Narratives - Codes and themes - Qualitative results
	Synthesising quantitative and qualitative results	Analyse how both findings confirm, contradict, or extend understanding of LGNZ's lobbying outcomes	- Overall findings - Implications - Future research
Combined analysis			

5.1.1 Chapter organisation

The rest of this chapter follows the sequence summarised in Figure 5-1. Section 5.2 outlines the development of the hypotheses, drawing on the review of broader theories of interest group influence, the New Zealand policymaking process, and LGNZ practice. As will be presented in Chapter Eight, these hypotheses posit potential relationships between various factors and LGNZ's lobbying success. Section 5.3 describes the quantitative phase in which these hypotheses are tested statistically, outlining data sources, analytical approach, and key limitations. The statistical findings are then explored in-depth during the qualitative phase, where specific legislation is examined through interviews and thematic analysis. Section 5.4 explains this phase, including how the quantitative results shaped case selection and interview design. Section 5.5 concludes by outlining how the two sets of findings are brought together and assessed for consistency to reach this thesis' overall findings.

5.2 Hypothesis development

The development of hypotheses in this thesis follows a sequential and cumulative logic, moving from broad theories of interest group influence to the specific case of LGNZ's lobbying in New Zealand. This logic is informed by the literature reviews in Chapters Two to Four, which synthesise research on interest group influence, local government associations, and the New Zealand policymaking process, and by the content analyses presented in Chapters Six and Seven examining LGNZ's lobbying agenda and practices. This approach ensures that the empirical analysis is grounded in established theory while reflecting the realities of the New Zealand context. As the first systematic study of LGNZ's policy influence, this thesis also adopts an exploratory approach, instead of assuming specific causal pathways.

At the broadest level, local government associations (LGAs) operate like interest groups in how they engage with central government and should therefore be examined in that light (de Widt & Laffin, 2018). The interest group literature reviewed in Chapter Two points to three broad categories of factors linked to interest group influence that are discussed at length in Section 2.6. Organisational factors relate to a group's internal resources, expertise, and tactical choices. Institutional factors concern the political system in which lobbying takes place, including the degree of access and responsiveness afforded to interest groups. Issues-based factors focus on the characteristics of specific policy issues, such as their technical

complexity, political salience, or level of contestation. Chapter Three complements this discussion by examining scholarship on LGAs and intergovernmental relations, with particular attention to how LGAs engage in collective lobbying, mediate relationships between central and local government, and seek to advance shared territorial interests within national policymaking processes. Together, the international perspectives from these literature review chapters offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the potential determinants of LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and, in turn, its influence.

Chapter Four situates the international perspectives within the features of New Zealand's political environment, particularly the opportunities and constraints created under Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation. Understanding this context not only identifies relevant institutional factors determining interest group influence but also clarifies the environment in which interest groups operate and the types of lobbying activities they can pursue. This thesis then turns to LGNZ to examine its specific profile as a lobbying organisation.

5.2.1 Using content analysis in hypothesis development

Aside from the review of the existing literature, content analysis also supports the descriptive and theoretical work that informs the hypotheses to be tested later in this thesis. The analysis draws on a comprehensive body of LGNZ internal documentation, supplemented by central government reports, to examine its lobbying behaviour and policy interests. The documents are approached as strategic texts rather than objective records, with attention directed to recurring patterns in how LGNZ describes its activities, priorities, and relationships. When similar priorities, tactics, or themes appear consistently across reports and over time, this suggests relatively stable features of how the association positions and conducts its lobbying. Guided by key themes emerging from the literature reviewed in previous chapters, the analysis of the contents of these documents seeks to identify organisational and issue-based factors of interest group influence that are specifically applicable to LGNZ.

The core dataset includes LGNZ annual reports from 1998 to 2021, which establish the association's organisational profile and long-term patterns of engagement; parliamentary select committee submissions from the 48th to the 52nd New Zealand Parliaments which

capture LGNZ's positions on specific legislative bills; and internal policy materials, including annual policy priorities, member-approved remits, and the LGNZ Constitution. These sources are complemented by reports from government agencies such as the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Productivity Commission, and the Department of Internal Affairs, as well as historical accounts of LGNZ's predecessor organisations and relevant political context drawn from election manifestos and public statements by major political parties.

Several qualitative analytical techniques are employed. Word search and frequency analysis of terms such as "advocate," "influence," and "lobby" are conducted, followed by systematic coding and categorisation to examine LGNZ's lobbying tendencies. In addition, LGNZ's submissions are subjected to clause-by-clause comparison with the corresponding legislative bills, enabling assessment of how collective local government concerns, such as cost and local autonomy, were articulated. This comparison also identifies LGNZ's specific policy preferences at the provision level for the later assessment of its lobbying success.

To develop LGNZ's organisational profile, analysis of annual reports reveals LGNZ's programmes, activities, and actions aimed at shaping national policy affecting local government. Chapter Six discusses how these documents provide evidence that LGNZ engages in behaviours widely associated with interest groups, including engagement with central government, producing research, making submissions, and working with government agencies. This material supports the classification of LGNZ's lobbying tactics and confirms its character as mostly a user of insider tactics.

As part of developing issue-based hypotheses, content analysis is applied to LGNZ's statements in its annual policy priorities, remits, and parliamentary submissions to identify the objectives and priorities of LGNZ. These documents provide an account of LGNZ's lobbying agenda and practices based on official and public communications. Chapter Seven highlights key themes within LGNZ's advocacy work, including local autonomy, reduced compliance costs, and funding pressures. Identifying these themes enables an assessment of whether some local government concerns are more or less likely to be accepted by central government.

In summary, insights from the literature review and content analysis provide an empirical foundation for specifying the factors likely to shape LGNZ's lobbying outcomes. A content analysis of the association's reported activities, its interactions with key policy actors, and its recurring policy positions informs the identification of testable relationships between these factors and LGNZ's lobbying success within the New Zealand context.

5.3 Quantitative phase

The research design has been developed so that quantitative and qualitative analyses complement each other to provide a broad and in-depth understanding of LGNZ's influence. The quantitative analysis forms the primary phase, statistically testing the hypotheses developed on the relationship between LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and organisational, institutional, and issue-based factors. To enable statistical analysis, this thesis draws on documentary evidence from LGNZ's submissions on randomly selected legislation, alongside relevant parliamentary documents. Documentary analysis involves cross-referencing legislation at different stages with LGNZ's submissions, producing samples of both successful and unsuccessful lobbying. The policy issues raised by LGNZ in each submission form the units of analysis, with multiple issues identified per submission. Hypothesised factors of lobbying success are tested using the data derived from these documents supplemented with data from transcripts of parliamentary debates and departmental reports. All relevant information is extracted and categorised, allowing for a detailed understanding of LGNZ's lobbying across different legislative processes. With statistical evidence identifying factors associated with influence, this thesis then turns to the second phase of the research design, which involves qualitative case study analysis and serves a more explanatory role (see Section 5.4).

5.3.1 How LGNZ's policy influence will be examined

This thesis builds upon previous studies that assessed influence through the impact of lobbying activities on policy outcomes (e.g., Bunea, 2013; Bunea & Ibenskas, 2017; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Klüver, 2009a, 2013; Pedersen, 2013). These scholars have assessed these impacts by examining the degree of similarity between an interest group's position and the corresponding provisions in certain stages of legislative development. In the context of the New Zealand legislative process, determining influence involves identifying similarities between LGNZ's policy preferences, as outlined in its submissions to Parliament, and the final

version of a legislative bill that received majority votes in the House. Similarities in the enacted version of the legislation with LGNZ's stated position are taken as evidence of this interest group's success in influencing decision-making.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the decision to measure influence by examining policy outcomes is justified for several reasons. Doing this focuses analysis on a specific point of the policymaking process where the effects of lobbying are arguably observable. Analysing the outcome of the policymaking process should also capture the impact of all types of lobbying activities. In addition, this approach can be applied across multiple cases, making the findings more generalisable than they would be if influence was assessed in terms of the outcome of a single policy. However, rather than equating similarities between LGNZ submission and enacted legislation directly with influence, as some scholars have, this thesis regards such similarities as 'lobbying success'—a practical yet imperfect proxy of influence. As also explored in Chapter Two, influence is a complex and contested concept that is extremely difficult to be observed directly. Measuring the alignment between an interest group's stated preferences and legislative outcomes does not capture the full concept of influence, particularly as it may relate to the different faces of power (see Section 2.2). Focusing on the capacity to affect the content of decisions, specifically whether final decisions favour LGNZ's position, may overstate influence where outcomes reflect pre-existing policy alignment, strategic adaptation, or favourable political conditions rather than lobbying effects. Prioritising enacted legislation may overlook other forms of influence such as agenda control or the prevention of unwanted policy.

5.3.2 Data sources: Submissions and parliamentary documents

Submissions and parliamentary documents provide a record of LGNZ's lobbying activities, offering a body of documentary evidence that spans from its policy positions to legislative outcomes. Table 5-1 below summarises the data sources used in the quantitative analysis, outlining the size and the main analytical purpose of each source. The sections that follow provide a more detailed discussion of how each data source is used in the research design. Section 5.3.3 then explains how coding, categorisation, and numerical transformation are used to extract data and prepare them for statistical analysis.

Table 5-1 Summary of data sources used in the quantitative analysis

Data Source	Volume analysed and main purpose
Initial pool of LGNZ submissions	78 LGNZ submissions retrieved from the 47th to 52nd Parliaments (2002–2020)
Eligible sample pool	73 LGNZ submissions, excluding five submissions relating to non-enacted bills
Randomly selected sample	37 LGNZ submissions
Policy issues (unit of analysis)	453 distinct policy issues extracted from the sampled submissions
Bills as introduced	37 corresponding bills used as the baseline for tracking legislative change
Departmental reports	37 departmental reports across 14 government agencies, used to assess whether agencies agreed or disagreed with LGNZ on each policy issue
Select committee reports	37 select committee reports, used to determine whether the select committee adopted the recommendations by LGNZ
Hansard records	37 second reading transcripts and 37 Committee of the whole House transcripts, used to assess whether an LGNZ policy issue was taken up by specific political parties during parliamentary debates
Final Acts of Parliament	37 enacted Acts used to determine final policy outcomes

5.3.2.1 LGNZ submissions

This thesis analyses LGNZ’s written submissions to select committees to determine its specific policy preferences on selected pieces of legislation. Submissions allow an interest group, such as LGNZ, to express its views on proposed legislation (LAC, 2001). Through the submissions process, the select committee is presented with a range of issues and concerns that the bill under consideration may raise for different groups who aim to convince committee members to recommend changes to the proposed legislation. LGNZ often uses submissions to signal its policy preferences; these include proposals that could secure additional resources for local authorities, offer clearer interpretations of the law, or preserve local discretion so councils can serve their communities effectively. Submissions have been an important tool for LGNZ in their advocacy for their preferred ways for local authorities to implement a law. The act of making written statements provides an interest group, such as LGNZ, with a public platform to express its policy positions and potentially amplify its impact (Burstein & Hirsh, 2007).

Available studies justify the use of formal advocacy documents, such as submissions to the select committee, for determining the policy positions of an LGA. For Cigler (1994, p. 4), the written agendas of county associations across the American states covered in her study

provided “an objective, not perceptual, view” of their interests. Shott (2015, p. 139) used resolutions from Canadian municipal associations because they “capture how municipalities approach collective intergovernmental lobbying.” Hays (1991, p. 1086) viewed congressional testimony as a good, if not the best, indicator of lobbying by similar groups in the United States because they “find it to be a way to communicate their positions on issues of concern to them to both Congress and the public.” An earlier study by the same author also found that the frequency of testimony was closely related to the level of influence attributed to an interest group by other actors within a policy network (Hays, 1990).

Sampling approach for the quantitative phase

A search of Parliament.nz identified 78 submissions on different pieces of legislation from LGNZ between the 47th and 52nd Parliaments (2002–2020). This timeframe is selected for two reasons. First, online records are available only from the 47th Parliament onward. Second, the 53rd Parliament (2020–2023) is excluded because it was still in session during data collection. The final sample includes 73 submissions, as five of the associated bills were not enacted, and are consequently excluded from the analysis. In the case of withdrawn bills, there is no legislative act representing a final policy outcome against which LGNZ’s position can be compared for the purpose of assessing lobbying success. However, LGNZ might still have played a role in preventing the enactment of these bills. Half of these (37) bills are randomly selected to provide some variability, allowing for statistical analysis to examine the impact of institutional, organisational, and issue-based variables on LGNZ’s lobbying success. The selection process is further discussed in Section 5.3.3.1.

5.3.2.2 Departmental reports

After submissions have been received by the select committee, department officials of the minister in charge of the bill prepare a report summarising the evidence and recommending amendments to the select committee (McGee, 2017). A departmental report typically contains a clause-by-clause analysis of the concerns raised during the submission process (LAC, 2001). Depending on the officials’ consideration of these concerns (i.e., whether they agree or disagree), changes may be proposed generally and/or for each clause. In consultation with their minister, officials may also propose amendments beyond what submitters have put forward, but they cannot make any recommendations that are inconsistent with a bill’s policy

objectives as agreed by the Cabinet, outside the scope of a bill, or of an act if it is an amendment (LAC, 2001). Departmental reports serve as a key data source because they make it possible to assess whether LGNZ's policy preferences gained support from the relevant bureaucratic actor. Identifying the lead agency responsible for the bill also enables comparison across agencies and provides insight into the nature of LGNZ's relationship with each.

5.3.2.3 Select committee reports

After considering the departmental report, the select committee votes on whether to accept its recommendations (LAC, 2001). As such, the departmental report serves as the basis for most of the amendments the select committee endorses on a bill. Once the committee has agreed on the amendments, the Parliamentary Counsel Office revises the original bill in consultation with departmental officials. The committee then examines the revised bill during a process known as consideration, after which they vote on whether to accept each of the amendments. An amendment must receive a majority of the committee votes to be formally endorsed. The result is the select committee report, which includes a version of the bill showing the changes the committee agreed to. These changes are shown by crossing out removed text and underlining new text added to the original bill. The select committee report also includes a commentary that explains recommended amendments and the reasons behind those amendments.

Select committee reports are a valuable source for assessing LGNZ's lobbying success because they set out the amendments that gained majority support and are therefore highly likely to be adopted by the House. Comparing these changes with LGNZ's policy preferences provides a direct measure of intermediate success and allows institutional factors to be tested, including whether supportive committee recommendations or alignment with the administering agency's advice make LGNZ's proposals more likely to be accepted. The accompanying commentary also clarifies the reasons for each amendment, enabling identification of the extent to which LGNZ input shaped the committee's decisions and confirmation of the importance of the select committee stage as a venue for LGNZ lobbying. These reports also record how committee members from different political parties voted, offering further insight into the political dynamics shaping outcomes.

5.3.2.4 Parliamentary debates (Hansard reports)

Examining transcriptions of parliamentary debates, also known as Hansard reports, can reveal instances in which MPs explicitly mention LGNZ or reference its policy positions and offer insights into the group's lobbying impact or the extent to which its concerns were reflected in parliamentary discussions (Weaver-Hightower, 2014). The examination primarily centres on speeches delivered during the second reading and Committee of the whole House. These choices are justified in the next paragraphs.

During parliamentary debates, the pressure to change a bill is felt most during the second reading and Committee of the whole House stages (LAC, 2001). The issues discussed by MPs in the second reading indicate what remains contentious about the bill and what amendments MPs may propose for the Committee of the whole House. At that stage, the House considers and debates the bill in detail, and all MPs are provided with an opportunity to scrutinise it and to move changes to its text (McGee, 2017). Without the Committee of the whole House stage, only those who served on the select committee would have this opportunity. At the same time, the Government can undo select committee amendments, as "the opinion of the select committee does not reflect the opinion of the majority in the House" (Palmer & Palmer, 1997, p. 374). The Government can propose further changes ranging from minor technical adjustments to more substantive changes, including new policy objectives.

The introduction of MMP changed the criteria that the Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives uses for allocating calls (the right to speak) in recognition of the "party-representative nature of a member's contribution to debate" (McGee, 2017, p. 219). Beyond the traditional practice of alternating calls between the two sides of the House, the Speaker now gives members from each party the opportunity to speak, allowing the positions of different political parties to be observed on aspects of bills that LGNZ sought to influence. The Speaker can also allocate calls to reflect party size, to give priority to party spokespersons, and to consider individual seniority, interests, and expertise.

5.3.2.5 Acts of Parliament

Acts of Parliament represent the final policy outcome to compare with LGNZ's policy preferences. Acknowledging that this is an imperfect proxy for the group's broader influence, lobbying success is measured by whether LGNZ's legislative requests are reflected in the Act. Success indicators could include the retention of provisions LGNZ supported, changes that are typographical or consequential,² the clarification of terms, the introduction of technical amendments, or the removal of provisions LGNZ opposed. If LGNZ priorities are not reflected in the Act, their lobbying in that case is considered unsuccessful.

5.3.3 Statistical analysis

Chapter Four notes that several scholars and practitioners view New Zealand's policymaking as relatively rational, institutionally shaped, and driven by information (e.g., Grey, 2015; Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011; Walker, 2014;). If these perceptions are correct, then patterns in the policymaking process should be detectable through statistical analysis. The quantitative phase tests this by examining textual data from the sources outlined above. These materials are systematically coded into smaller units, organised into categories, and compared across the dataset. Data transformation and statistical techniques are used to assess patterns across observations.

This process begins with qualitative coding followed by the conversion of the codes into numerical data for statistical analysis. The researcher extracts, categorises, and quantifies all the information of interest. To facilitate these steps, software programs are employed, namely NVivo, Microsoft Excel, and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Table 5-2 below outlines the multi-stage process used for assessing lobbying success.

² Consequential changes are proposed to ensure its consistency with the rest of the legislation, after the introduction or amendment of a clause.

Table 5-2 Stages of the ‘lobbying success’ analysis
adopted from Weaver-Hightower (2014)

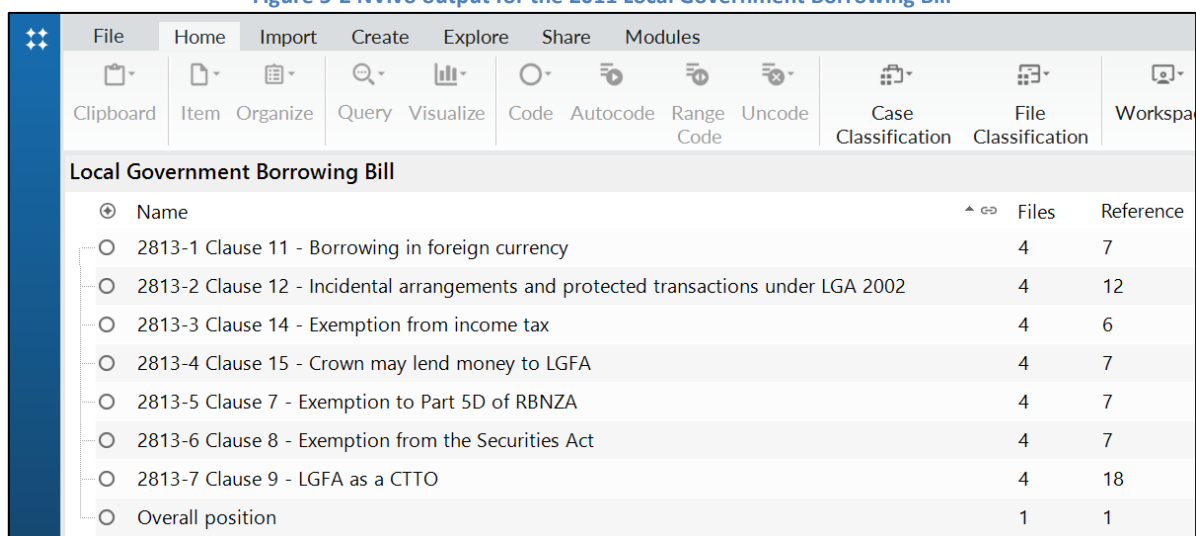
Stage	General process and specific subprocesses
One qual	Compare policy positions and outcomes to draw samples of lobbying success a. Code LGNZ submissions to identify policy positions b. Code Acts to identify policy outcomes
Two qual	Identify factors of lobbying success in parliamentary documents a. Code LGNZ submissions b. Code departmental reports c. Code select committee reports d. Code second reading and in committee hearings e. Identify other factors (e.g., number of submissions)
Three quant	Convert the qualitative data from steps 1 and 2 into numerical data
Four quant	Undertake cross-sample analysis a. Describe the distribution of LGNZ’s lobbying success b. Cross-tabulate lobbying success and its factors c. Conduct chi-square tests of independence
Five qual	Evaluate the relationship between lobbying success and its factors (Ch 9)

Stage One involves cross-referencing selected Acts of Parliament and LGNZ's submissions to draw samples. In Stage Two, explanatory variables are identified from the documents discussed in the previous section. These variables are mostly grouped into categories or ranked in order, to represent institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors for predicting the likelihood of LGNZ’s lobbying success. Examples include institutional features such as the government’s ideological orientation, organisational tactics like the number of council submissions reflecting “strength in numbers,” and issue-based characteristics, including whether the proposed change is substantive or technical. Together, the first two stages produce an archaeology of a legislative clause, tracing its assertions back to LGNZ’s policy proposal and vice versa (Weaver-Hightower, 2014).

By comparing the stated goals of interest groups with contextual information about the issues and the outcomes achieved, it becomes possible to assess influence (Mahoney, 2007). NVivo is the main tool used in these stages. Taking the 2011 Local Government Borrowing Bill as an example, Figure 5-2 below shows how each policy proposal is assigned a numerical identifier using the bill code for easy traceback across software programs. The ‘Files’ column indicates the number of parliamentary documents containing statements that intersect with LGNZ’s

policy proposal. The 'Reference' column displays the total number of references for each document.

Figure 5-2 NVivo output for the 2011 Local Government Borrowing Bill



Local Government Borrowing Bill			
Name	Files	Reference	
2813-1 Clause 11 - Borrowing in foreign currency	4	7	
2813-2 Clause 12 - Incidental arrangements and protected transactions under LGA 2002	4	12	
2813-3 Clause 14 - Exemption from income tax	4	6	
2813-4 Clause 15 - Crown may lend money to LGFA	4	7	
2813-5 Clause 7 - Exemption to Part 5D of RBNZA	4	7	
2813-6 Clause 8 - Exemption from the Securities Act	4	7	
2813-7 Clause 9 - LGFA as a CTTO	4	18	
Overall position	1	1	

All the selected pieces of legislation undergo the same process, with the resulting observations categorised and collated into a single spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. Continuing with the Local Government Borrowing Bill example, Figure 5-3 displays LGNZ's seven policy positions. Statements from LGNZ's submission and parliamentary documents are classified based on specific characteristics such as the type of evidence provided and the position on LGNZ's policy proposal. These classifications form the set of factors for the analysis. Appendix A elaborates on the explanatory and explained variables and how they are operationally defined. These categories are then numerically transformed (Stage Three) and statistically analysed using SPSS (Stage Four). Information on chi-square test of independence, the chosen statistical tool, is provided in Section 5.3.3.2.

Figure 5-3 MS Excel output for the 2011 Local Government Borrowing Bill

	A	B	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Obs	Bill Code	Evidence	LGNZ Position	Change	Agenda Type	LGNZ President	Dep Report
52	1302-3	1302	experiential	objections on implementation	substantive	clear legal framework	Cull	no position
53	1302-4	1302	experiential	fully opposed	substantive		Cull	no position
54	1302-5	1302	experiential	objections on implementation	substantive	local input	Cull	no position
55	1302-6	1302	case	fully support	no change		Cull	agree
56	2813-1	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	autonomy	Yule	agree
57	2813-2	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	clear legal framework	Yule	agree
58	2813-3	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	less compliance cost	Yule	agree
59	2813-4	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	funding	Yule	agree
60	2813-5	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	less compliance cost	Yule	agree
61	2813-6	2813	experiential	fully support	no change	less compliance cost	Yule	agree
62	2813-7	2813	experiential	technical amendments	clarification	clear legal framework	Yule	agree
63	3272-1	3272	no evidence	fully support	no change	clear legal framework	Yule	agree
64	3272-2	3272	experiential	fully opposed	substantive	clear legal framework	Yule	disagree
65	3272-3	3272	case	fully support	no change	autonomy	Yule	agree
66	3272-4	3272	experiential	fully support	no change	local input	Yule	agree
67	3272-5	3272	experiential	fully support	no change	less compliance cost	Yule	agree
68	632-1	632	experiential	fully opposed	substantive	autonomy	Yule	agree
69	632-2	632	experiential	fully opposed	substantive	autonomy	Yule	no position
70	632-3	632	experiential	objections on implementation	substantive	clear legal framework	Yule	no position
71	632-4	632	experiential	fully opposed	substantive	less compliance cost	Yule	disagree
72	632-5	632	no evidence	fully support	no change	clear legal framework	Yule	agree

5.3.3.1 Unit of analysis and sampling

This thesis catalogues the policy proposals of LGNZ separately and records each as a win or loss. The unit of analysis is therefore the policy issue raised rather than the whole submission or legislative bill. This means that the number of observations is the sum of all the policy issues LGNZ expressed a position on, across all selected bills. There are three reasons for analysing at the policy issue/provision level, as opposed to legislation level. First, LGNZ usually makes more than one policy request in a legislative bill. Second, the legislative process operates on an issue-by-issue basis. For instance, in a departmental report, an agency typically responds to submissions by clause, not by the commenter. Thus, by recording the policy issues raised in LGNZ's submission, the relevant clause proposed in the bill, and the agency's response, one can assess whether LGNZ won or lost on that particular issue. Third, Ainsworth et al. (2015) cautioned that treating an entire policy document, such as LGNZ's submission, as a unit of analysis misrepresents the concerns of the drafter and can skew the interpretation of statistical results. They demonstrated that at an aggregate level, business interests appeared to be more successful than local government interests, but comparing successes achieved across the policy issues raised, business and local government interests won at similar rates.

To make generalisations about a political process, it is necessary to identify the population of interest and randomly select a sample for analysis (Gamson, 1975). Ideally, sampling for the analysis should be conducted at the issue level. This means breaking down each of LGNZ's 78 submissions into the specific policy positions it expressed—for example requests for changes

to particular clauses, concerns about costs, or proposals to reduce compliance burdens—and then randomly selecting a sample of these individual positions for analysis. However, this approach requires extensive qualitative work and is not feasible due to time and resource constraints. As discussed in Section 5.3.2.1, randomised sampling is therefore done at the legislation-level.

5.3.3.2 Chi-square test of independence

The data for the quantitative phase consists mostly of categorical and ordinal variables. For example, lobbying success is classified as full, partial, or no success based on how closely LGNZ's stated policy preferences in submissions align with the relevant clauses in the final legislative act. As mentioned earlier, explanatory variables include factors such as the ideological orientation of the government or the number of council submissions supporting LGNZ, which may be few, several, or many.

The features of the variables used for the quantitative analysis have been a key consideration in choosing chi-square tests of independence as the statistical tool for this phase. Quantitative social science research often seeks to identify factors that are dependent on each other, such as age and voting behaviour. One variable is statistically dependent or correlated with another variable when there exists between them a “consistent, predictable relationship” (Gravetter et al., 2020, p. 548), meaning that their values tend to move together whether in the same or opposite direction. Chi-square determines the dependence between categorical variables such as nominal and ordinal data by comparing how frequently outcomes occur across different categories. In this thesis, the chi-square test is used to examine whether LGNZ's lobbying success varies with factors such as the ideological orientation of the government or the number of council submissions supporting LGNZ's position. The test can indicate whether full or partial lobbying success is more common under centre-left or centre-right governments, or in legislative bills where councils provide more or fewer submissions in support of LGNZ. Identifying these patterns addresses one of this thesis's research objectives by providing systematic empirical evidence about which institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors are most consistently associated with successful advocacy for LGNZ across different legislative cases.

Demonstrating dependence between two variables using chi-square tests requires showing that they are not independent (Gravetter et al., 2020). This involves rejecting the null hypothesis, which assumes no relationship between the variables. The null is rejected when the observed frequencies differ significantly from the expected frequencies calculated under the assumption of independence. This step is essential for determining whether instances of LGNZ's lobbying success are statistically associated with the factors identified during hypothesis development.

The chi square test is a two-variable technique, meaning it examines the relationship between two variables at a time. This helps avoid multicollinearity, which occurs when explanatory variables are highly correlated. This is relevant because some variables in this thesis appear to have high correlation. For example, amendments adopted by the select committee were most often enacted into the final Act, a pattern noted in Chapter Four, Section 4.5.1.4. In a multivariable analysis, multicollinearity can make it difficult to identify the unique contribution of each explanatory variable to LGNZ's lobbying success and can lead to unreliable estimates (Allen, 1997). Finally, while chi-square tests identify statistical relationships, they do not establish causality. Nevertheless, because the variables in this study were observed in a clear time order, from LGNZ's submission through to the Act of Parliament, this sequence provides a reasonable basis for inferring the direction of any relationships identified. This limitation is also addressed in the subsequent qualitative phase (see Chapter Nine), which is designed to contextualise the statistical associations and explore the mechanisms that underpin them.

5.3.4 Limitations

5.3.4.1 *Limitations from the data*

The quantitative phase of this thesis focuses on instances where there is some degree of similarity between LGNZ's policy position and the final legislative response. This means the emphasis is on the formal stage of policymaking. Recognising that it represents only one of several points in the policy process where influence can be exerted (Binderkrantz et al., 2013), this formal stage has significant implications for the final outcome, and examining it in depth should still shed light on the conditions that support LGNZs successful lobbying.

Relying solely on the documents listed in the previous section for examining LGNZ's policy influence presents other limits. Assessing influence through Acts of Parliament overlooks other forms of gains that may be valuable to LGNZ. The association can shape national policy other than legislation, and it may also succeed by preventing bills it opposes from advancing. These types of influence are not captured when relying only on enacted law.

LGNZ also expresses its policy views through channels other than formal submissions. Chapter Six discusses these activities, including informal contact with members of parliament and government departments, participation in technical groups, and engagement with media. LGNZ may choose not to raise issues in its submission if these have already been resolved through earlier forms of engagement. However, such informal activity is often unrecorded and internal, which makes it difficult to observe and quantify. For this thesis, submissions remain the most reliable indicator of LGNZs formal activity, as they provide an official record of what the association asked Parliament to consider.

5.3.4.2 Limitations of the statistical findings

The statistical findings of this thesis cannot provide a definitive answer about whether LGNZ is directly responsible for any given legislative outcome. Policymaking involves several stages, including drafting, consultation, and debate, and reflects the actions of many actors: groups with similar or competing interests, elected representatives, public officials, and other stakeholders. Because of this complexity, no single outcome can be traced solely to the efforts of one group. What the analysis can show are the conditions under which LGNZ is more likely to see its preferred position represented in an Act. Understanding these conditions can help local authorities make more effective choices in their collective advocacy.

Achieving statistical generalisation requires simplifying the policy process. Categorising and quantifying the data help in measuring policy inputs and outputs and examining how different combinations of these elements correlate with LGNZs lobbying outcomes. Completing these tasks requires focusing on observable, documentary evidence rather than on the values, conflicts, and other complex features that also define policymaking. This approach cannot therefore fully capture internal politics, norms, conflicts, and power relations (Shott, 2015). Nevertheless, Weaver-Hightower (2014) argues that the input-output approach remains

valuable when direct observation is not possible. Researchers often rely on retrospective accounts, decision-making frequently takes place behind closed doors, and influence can be diffuse. In these cases, a systematic reading of texts can reveal patterns of influence through the alignment of language between policymakers and external advocates. The qualitative phase aims to capture some of the informal activity and the wider complexity of policymaking by drawing on interviews and other sources to examine in greater depth LGNZs lobbying practices and influence on one piece of legislation.

5.4 Qualitative phase

The objective of the qualitative phase is to explain and elaborate on the findings from the quantitative phase, complementing the representativeness and generalisability of statistical analysis with a greater degree of depth and complexity. The qualitative phase uses a case study of a specific piece of legislation to interpret and validate the statistical associations identified through chi-square tests. Examining an actual legislative process allows the study to show how these factors can operate in practice, why they matter for the outcome, and how they are perceived by key actors. Interviews with stakeholders involved in or closely observing the bill focus on what LGNZ did to influence the process and how the wider political context shaped the outcome. To ensure this thesis offers a holistic and robust understanding of LGNZ's influence, it is crucial that the qualitative phase is linked to the quantitative results.

The qualitative phase focuses on a single piece of legislation that represents a successful outcome for LGNZ and reflects most of the factors statistically associated with success. This targeted case selection provides the context needed to interpret and validate the numerical findings. The statistical results also shape the interview questions, ensuring the qualitative inquiry stays aligned with the overall research objectives and theoretical framework. Ultimate integration is achieved by identifying points of confirmation, contradiction, or expansion between the quantitative and qualitative results, bringing both phases together to reach an overall understanding of LGNZ's influence (discussed further in Section 5.5).

5.4.1 Case selection

Chapter Nine examines in greater depth the factors that shaped LGNZ's lobbying outcomes on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2. This case study offers an opportunity to analyse a positive example of lobbying success in which LGNZ's efforts shaped

legislative outcomes in demonstrable ways. As will be discussed in Chapter Nine, this Bill exemplifies LGNZ's lobbying success, as confirmed by interviews and official records, and it reflects several of the statistically significant factors identified in the quantitative phase. These include strong council backing for LGNZ's policy position, initially evident not only in submissions to the select committee but also through public campaigns. The Bill is particularly suited for in-depth analysis of LGNZ's lobbying activities as it captures a period of heightened policy tension between central and local government, where economic efficiency and local democracy were put in direct conflict. The case is also analytically rich due to its three-year duration, which spanned two governments (National-led and Labour-led) and several Ministers of Local Government, allowing detailed exploration of how ministerial dynamics, party ideology, and political timing, such as an upcoming national election, shaped policy outcomes. The publicity that surrounded the Bill provides further opportunity to deepen understanding of LGNZ's influence, complementing and extending insights from the quantitative phase.

5.4.2 Data sources: Interviews and other documents

The qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews with five stakeholders, including central government officials, an LGNZ representative, and a local government academic. Participants are initially identified from names appearing in documentary sources, with more participants recruited through recommendations from other interviewees, following a technique known as snowball sampling. This phase is designed to address the third research question of this thesis by explaining how and why particular factors shaped the legislative outcome and unpacking the statistical relationships identified in the quantitative phase through the perspectives of key policy actors. Interview questions are explicitly aligned with this thesis' theoretical framework, which categorises the determinants of influence into organisational factors, institutional factors, and issue characteristics.

Organisational factors are explored through questions such as, "What activities did LGNZ undertake to advocate for its position, and which of these had the greatest impact on the outcome?" Institutional conditions are examined through questions including, "Did the shift in government from National-led to Labour-led help or hinder LGNZ's advocacy efforts?" and "Did DIA officials interact with LGNZ during the policy development process?" Issue-based

factors are investigated through questions such as "What were the most contentious aspects of this legislation from your perspective?" and "What conflicting interests were involved, and was there significant agreement on any aspects?" Evaluative questions are also used to assess LGNZ's standing within the policy system, for example, "In your view, how influential is LGNZ as a policy advocacy group, and why?" The interview schedule is included in Appendix F.

To supplement the stakeholder interviews, the qualitative analysis also draws on a wide range of documentary sources. Internal documents provided by LGNZ are triangulated with council records, including meeting minutes and submissions, to analyse the association's issue framing and coordinated advocacy. Parliamentary records relating to the selected Bill used in the quantitative phase, including Bill drafts, select committee reports, and Hansard debates are further examined alongside Cabinet papers and regulatory impact statements to trace the Government's initial policy position and any subsequent shifts following LGNZ's advocacy. Media coverage, including editorials and headlines, is analysed to assess how LGNZ's messaging was reflected in public discourse.

5.4.3 Thematic analysis

Data collected for the qualitative phase are analysed using thematic analysis, an approach selected for its flexibility and its suitability for identifying patterns across interviews and documentary material (Bowen et al., 2017; Toyon, 2021). Following Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis framework, the researcher first engages closely with the data, reading interview transcripts a few times alongside other data sources. This familiarisation phase supports an initial understanding of how LGNZ's lobbying was described by participants and was reflected in the documentary record.

The data are then coded with reference to the research questions and the statistical associations identified in the quantitative phase. Coding focuses on identifying where explanations for LGNZ's lobbying success were shared across participants and documents. While guided by the quantitative findings, the approach remains deliberately flexible to capture evidence that clarified, challenged, or expanded the emerging explanation of LGNZ's lobbying success. This flexibility aligns with the sequential explanatory research design, under which the qualitative phase serves to validate, deepen, or problematise the quantitative

results. The structure of New Zealand's policy and legislative processes also provides a useful framework for tracing the sequence of events, decisions, and interactions that shaped LGNZ's outcomes on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2.

The resulting codes are subsequently grouped into broader themes that capture recurring patterns in how LGNZ sought to influence the Bill in practice, including the use of insider and outsider lobbying strategies, council mobilisation, and developments in the political environment, such as ministerial and government changes. Themes are reviewed and refined by checking them through triangulation across different sources. For example, useful evidence from the Horowhenua District Council agenda, which documented LGNZ's lobbying strategy and presented updates on the Bill, is assessed alongside interview accounts, material from other council, and central government records to ensure themes reflected sector-wide dynamics rather than isolated cases.

Each theme is defined and named to highlight its contribution to the overall explanation of LGNZ's lobbying success on the Bill. The final themes structure the qualitative findings chapter and include "LGNZ successfully framed debates on the Bill," "Councils swiftly and consistently rallied behind their association's position," and "the revolving door of Ministers of Local Government." Each theme is defined in relation to the mechanisms through which LGNZ reached its desired policy outcomes, linking actors' experiences to New Zealand's institutional processes. The themes are presented through a narrative integrating interview extracts with documentary and parliamentary evidence, providing a transparent account of the qualitative analysis and supporting integration with the quantitative findings.

5.4.4 Limitations

Prioritising depth over breadth, the qualitative phase focuses on a single piece of legislation as the basis for an in-depth case study. This enables engagement with a greater number of interviewees involved in the same policymaking process and outcome, engagement that creates stronger opportunities for cross-checking than would be possible if interviews were spread across multiple legislative acts. The selected legislation also offers a degree of representation, as it engages several factors associated with lobbying success.

However, reliance on a single case means that no qualitative evidence was identified for one statistical relationship, nor for factors that were not found to be statistically significant. This constrains the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, as discussed further in Chapter Ten, Section 10.3.4. While consideration of additional legislation could provide further insight into these relationships (or the lack thereof), and using a single case study for the qualitative phase cannot capture every possible explanation, the value of this approach lies in its capacity to demonstrate how relationships statistically identified can operate within a specific legislative process. Future research could extend the analysis to additional cases.

5.5 Synthesising the quantitative and qualitative findings

This thesis employs a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, which requires a systematic approach to linking the initial quantitative phase with the subsequent qualitative phase and, ultimately, the integration of their results to provide a comprehensive account of LGNZ's influence. The design follows a staged integration process, advancing in clearly defined phases that guide the reader through the logic of the research step by step (see Fetters et al., 2013, for alternative integration strategies). The quantitative findings shape the direction and focus of the qualitative inquiry, while the final interpretations draw together insights from both strands of evidence.

Integration is completed at the final interpretive stage presented in Chapter Ten, contributing to a holistic and robust understanding of LGNZ's influence. The final analysis integrates the findings from both phases to assess the 'fit of integration', or the extent to which the statistical results and case study evidence on factors associated with LGNZ's lobbying outcomes align (Fetters et al., 2013). This comparison enables the identification of three possible outcomes:

- **Confirmation:** The statistical and case study findings align, with the results supporting each other and strengthening the overall conclusions by demonstrating consistency across research methods.
- **Discordance:** The statistical and case study findings are inconsistent or contradictory, highlighting potential areas of conflict or disagreement between the statistical and case study findings.

- **Expansion:** The statistical and case study findings differ but are complementary; the insights from both types of findings provides a broader understanding of LGNZ's influence.

The findings from both phases are evaluated for coherence through a joint display in Table 10-1 in Chapter Ten (Fetters et al., 2013). This table provides a visual representation of the mixed methods approach of this thesis that enables a side-by-side comparison of quantitative and qualitative evidence to assess whether the results indicate confirmation, discordance, or expansion. By examining how these strands of evidence intersect, Table 10-1 supports a more balanced and robust conclusion about LGNZ's influence than either method could provide on its own.

Sequencing the research in this way manages the methodological complexity inherent in studying influence. The initial quantitative analysis identifies generalisable patterns, while the subsequent qualitative analysis provides the depth and nuance necessary to contextualise and interpret those patterns. Rather than treating these results in isolation, the approach integrates them to demonstrate how the patterns identified in the statistical analysis are aligned with, explained by, or clarified through the qualitative evidence.

5.6 Moving forward

This chapter has set out how the theoretical and conceptual foundations developed earlier are translated into a research design for assessing LGNZ's lobbying success as a proxy for influence. It has outlined the process through which the hypotheses are developed and then tested using documentary evidence to identify LGNZ's policy positions, track legislative change, and generate comparable observations for analysis. It has also explained how the resulting statistical patterns are interpreted through a focused case study. This thesis now moves into the empirical analysis, beginning with the next chapter, which examines LGNZ's organisational profile and lobbying tactics through content analysis.

Not just another lobbying group: Local Government New Zealand

6.1 Introduction

Local authorities were among the first lobbyists in New Zealand. Describing the history of interest group activity in the country, Jesson (1992) wrote: "Since the earliest days of colonisation, towns and localities had much to gain from government spending and as a matter of course tried to influence politicians in their favour" (p. 366). They remain significant actors in the policymaking process, as many of the services they are responsible for have a daily impact on citizens (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011).

Unsworth's (2014) survey which appeared in Figure 4-1 in Chapter Four provides evidence of local authorities' continued relevance in the lobbying arena. As the figure showed, local authorities comprised a considerable proportion (7%) of lobbying activities in New Zealand at the time the poll was conducted. They have also generated media attention for their advocacy activities, although not as intensively as other groups such as those from the farming and business sectors (see Tyler, 2015).

Working together, New Zealand local authorities "have shown that they have the political strength to demand a more collaborative relationship with central government" (Drage, 2016, p. 19). They often converge through their national association, Local Government New Zealand Te Kahui Kaunihera ō Aotearoa (LGNZ). The association claims to represent the national interests of councils and to promote good local governance (LGNZ, 2021a). As will be detailed later in this chapter, LGNZ takes on several activities towards these ends—including lobbying, business support, consultancy, and training—on behalf of local authorities.

6.1.1 Chapter objectives and organisation

This chapter presents the findings of the content analysis of LGNZ's annual reports, examining its organisational profile, the areas in which it concentrates its lobbying, and the tactics it employs. The analysis focuses on recurring patterns in how LGNZ operates as a lobbying

organisation to provide an empirical foundation for developing hypotheses in Chapter Eight about organisational factors relevant to LGNZ's lobbying success.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 6.2 offers an overview of LGNZ, covering its history, organisational structure, and functions. Highlighting what distinguishes it from other interest groups as the national advocate for local government, Section 6.3 explores LGNZ's role as a lobbying organisation. Section 6.4 examines LGNZ's lobbying resources through the lens of Callanan's (2012) typology, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2. Section 6.5 delves into LGNZ's lobbying activities, in terms of insider and outsider tactics, and investigates its relationships with key policy actors and institutions, as outlined in Chapter Four, Section 4.5.1. Finally, Section 6.6 concludes the chapter and outlines the subsequent steps for this thesis.

6.2 Local Government New Zealand

6.2.1 A brief history

LGNZ comes from a 150-year history of local authorities seeking to represent their collective interests before central government. Organised efforts by local authorities to influence central government policy in New Zealand date back to the late 1870s (Gilling & Henderson, 2000), when municipal and county officials started convening in separate annual conferences that were often attended by central government representatives. These meetings largely focused on proposing amendments to existing legislation that affected local authorities (Gilling & Henderson, 2000).

Driven by the ongoing need for local authorities to coordinate and communicate with central government on shared concerns, these regular assemblies evolved into the predecessors of LGNZ—the Municipal Association of New Zealand (MANZ) and the New Zealand Counties Association (NZCA). Gilling and Henderson's historical account demonstrates a longstanding pattern of collective engagement with decision-makers and of efforts to shape legislative outcomes favourable to local government. This account provides a useful lens for understanding how LGNZ operates today and how its influence may be observed.

Inspired by similar associations in the Australian colonies, town officials established MANZ in 1891 to represent their boards and other local bodies. Three years later, county councils followed suit, forming NZCA in 1894. Gilling and Henderson (2000) concluded that, in their first 90 years, these associations were largely successful in defending local government's structure and autonomy, even as local authorities continued to note central government's "privileged position" in handling their collective concerns (p. 50). Their illumination of such tensions between collective local advocacy and central governmental authority provides useful background for examining LGNZ's contemporary relationship with central government and the conditions under which the association's influence may be understood.

Despite the rivalry between MANZ and NZCA, representing different local authorities, "inroads by successive Governments" into the functions and structure of local government eventually forced them to cooperate (Gilling & Henderson, 2000, p. 84). They formed the Territorial Local Government Council to coordinate their "defensive response" to the 1974 Local Government Bill (p. 87). Such joint efforts paved the way for the eventual merger of the two associations in 1988, following the amalgamation of many of their members into new district councils after significant local government reforms. In 1990, the Regional Government Association, formed from the restructured Catchment Authorities Association (CAA) in 1989, joined the newly established New Zealand Local Government Association (NZLGA). By 1995, NZLGA had adopted the name Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ).

6.2.2 Organisational structure

LGNZ comprises six components, namely the general membership, the National Council, sector and zone groups, National Council committees, and the staff (see Figure 6-1 below). As of 2019, New Zealand had a total of 1,605 mayors, councillors, and board members (LGNZ, 2020a). Their inclusion in LGNZ's general membership is contingent on whether their respective councils have opted to join the association. In addition, the National Council may appoint organisations or individuals as associate or life members (Rules C2 & C8, LGNZ Constitution, 2021). Nineteen of LGNZ's locally elected members sit on the National Council, the association's governing body. To ensure representation, National Council seats are stratified, as discussed later in this section. The National Council is supplemented by nearly a

hundred elected and non-elected local government members and staff appointed to various committees.

Figure 6-1 LGNZ's organisational structure (researcher's rendition)
adapted from LGNZ Constitution as amended on 17 July 2021

LGNZ National Council (19) *		
Composition and Advice	Committees	Staff
Zone Groups Auckland Zone (3) ** Zone One (1) Zone Two (1) Zone Three (1) Zone Four (1) Zone Five (1) Zone Six (1) Sector Groups Metropolitan Group (3) Provincial Group (1) Rural Group (1) Regional Group (2)	Governance and Strategy Policy Advisory Audit and Risk Conference Chief Executives' Forum Te Maruata (1) Community Boards Executive Young Elected Members (1)	Office of the Chief Executive Advocacy and Policy Communications and Engagement Corporate Services, PacificTA, and EQUIP
* Includes the elected President of the National Council **The Mayor (or an alternate) and two representatives stand for Auckland		

6.2.2.1 LGNZ National Council

The National Council provides leadership, policy, and strategic direction to LGNZ. As Rule E18 provides, it “has and may exercise the sole control, discretion and governance of LGNZ” (LGNZ Constitution, 2021, p. 32). However, the Constitution and directions from Annual and Special General Meetings can impose limitations. It may also delegate powers to its committees with exceptions (see Rule E30).

The National Council consists of elected members drawn from six zone groups, four sector groups, Te Maruata (the association's Māori advisory group), and the Young Elected Members (YEM) Committee. The LGNZ Constitution defines elected members as Chairpersons, Mayors, Councillors, and Members of local and community boards (see Rule A2). Auckland Council, previously represented within the National Council, is no longer a member of LGNZ, having withdrawn its membership in 2023, with reported reasons including the cost of membership, concerns regarding the value derived from membership services, and a preference to engage

directly with central government (Plummer, 2003). Representatives to the National Council are elected from different strata to give voice to different types of local authorities and geographical segments of New Zealand. Appointments from Te Maruata and the YEM Committee ensure Māori and youth representation, respectively.

6.2.2.2 Zone and sector groups

Member Authorities are assigned to six geographical zones and four sector groups (see Table 6-1 below). Each zone and sector elect representative/s to the National Council. Aside from serving as LGNZ's leadership body, these groups perform other functions as provided in the Constitution. First, regularly scheduled meetings allow councils to identify and consider policy and operational matters they share as a zone or a sector. Second, they provide advice to the National Council and disseminate information to their members, thus establishing two-way communication between LGNZ and sub-groups. Third, they help the National Council and the Chief Executive in furthering their sector/geographical interests and the general interests of local government in New Zealand.

Table 6-1 LGNZ zone and sector sub-groupings
data source: LGNZ Constitution (2021)

Zones		Sectors	
	Coverage		Coverage
One	Northland/Auckland Zone	Metropolitan	Population of 90,000 or more
Two	Waikato/Bay of Plenty	Provincial	Population of 20,000 to 90,000
Three	Central North Island	Rural	Population under 20,000
Four	Greater Wellington	Regional	Regional and unitary councils
Five	Upper South Island/Canterbury	-	-
Six	Southland/Otago/West Coast	-	-

6.2.2.3 National Council Committees

The National Council appoints committees for general or special purposes (Rule E30, LGNZ Constitution, 2021). At the time of writing, there are eight committees (see Table 6-2 below), whose functions range from providing strategic and policy advice to the National Council; facilitating specific operations of the association such as financial reporting or its annual conferences; ensuring representation and policy inputs from Māori, non-elected, and young elected members; and serving as a conduit to local government stakeholders and other organisations.

Table 6-2 LGNZ National Council Committees

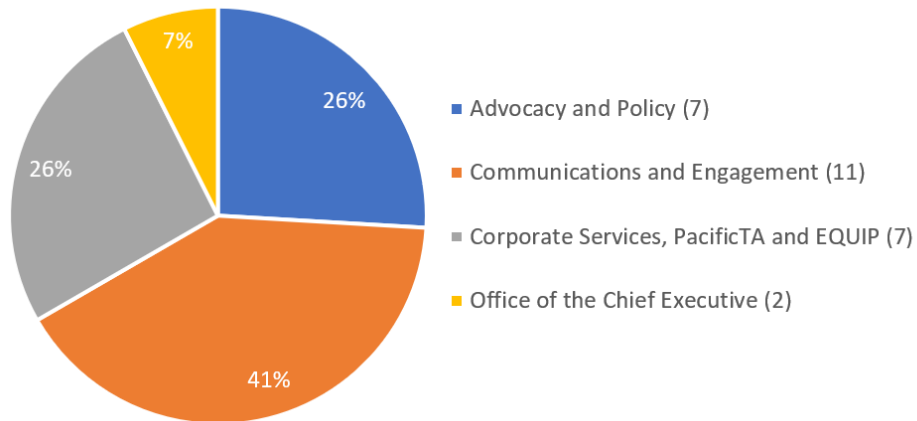
source: LGNZ (n.d.-b)

Committee	Purpose
Governance and Strategy	Advises on the overall strategic direction of LGNZ
Policy Advisory Group	Advises on policy matters relating to the economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of New Zealand and its communities
Audit and Risk Committee	Oversees management systems, accounting, and reporting practices of LGNZ
Conference Committee	Manages and plans the LGNZ annual conference
Chief Executives' Forum	Provides senior management lens for LGNZ's strategy and positioning
Te Maruata	Represents Māori elected members
Community Boards Executive Committee	Advises the National Council on behalf of community boards
Young Elected Members	Advises the National Council and network for young elected members

6.2.2.4 Staff

LGNZ's staff is divided into four main departments that are responsible for providing technical and logistical support to the National Council and LGNZ's sub-groupings; preparing submissions on relevant legislation and regulation, policy analysis, and other knowledge products; managing LGNZ's communication and relationship with its members and the broader public; and administering the association's international and professional development programs for local government staff. Leading its operation is the chief executive, who is appointed by the National Council (Rules I1-I3, LGNZ Constitution, 2021). Figure 6-2 below shows LGNZ's personnel allocation. EQUIP is the professional development and consultancy arm of LGNZ; it offers a range of services to local authorities such as training, recruitment, and performance assessment (LGNZ, n.d.-a). Meanwhile, PacificTA is a program that matches local government practitioners in New Zealand with their Pacific Island counterparts to give onsite training, mentoring, and assistance (LGNZ, n.d.-d). This program is funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme. Staffing can be flexible depending on the association's priorities. For instance, LGNZ merged the policy and communication teams into one advocacy unit to prioritise proactive lobbying (LGNZ, 2013a).

Figure 6-2 Composition of LGNZ staff
data source: LGNZ (n.d.-c)



6.2.2.5 LGNZ's organisational structure and its lobbying capacity

Managing representation of its diverse membership has been a defining feature of LGNZ since its inception and is a key condition for sustaining collective strength. Early negotiations between NZCA and MANZ involved securing assurances that larger urban councils would not overshadow rural interests (Gilling & Henderson, 2000). The current organisational structure of LGNZ can be viewed as a legacy of these early arrangements, designed to balance diverse interests in ways that underpin its capacity to act collectively and to mobilise member support for the positions it advances to central government.

Alongside mechanisms of representation, LGNZ's organisational arrangements also support the systematic generation and mobilisation of information. Its specialised staff and National Council Committees provide channels through which the experiences, technical knowledge, and policy concerns of member councils can be gathered, synthesised, and translated into sector-wide positions. This capacity to draw on grounded evidence from across the local government system should strengthen LGNZ's ability to engage with central government in informed and credible ways. Overall, LGNZ's emphasis on collective representation and its capacity to mobilise sector wide information provide an important context for how its engagement with central government can be examined empirically.

6.3 LGNZ as a lobbying organisation

LGNZ, like its counterparts abroad, has become a multifaceted association in response to the changing needs of its members. That said, this thesis investigates LGNZ primarily as a self-

described “lobbying organisation” (Pres. Lawrence Yule, LGNZ, 2011a, p. 4). It aims to identify factors associated with LGNZ’s success in fulfilling Objects (a) to (c) in its Charter (see Figure 6-3 below). Former CEO Eugene Bowen similarly noted that LGNZ is an organisation “assisting and representing” local authorities (LGNZ, 2010a, p. 2). As affiliation to LGNZ is voluntary, and because having all local authorities as members is important to its advocacy work, Objects (d) to (h) can be understood as incentives for retaining members (CLGF, 2017). A number of scholars have observed similar practices in other LGAs, as noted in Chapter Three (Section 3.2).

Figure 6-3 Functions of LGNZ

source: LGNZ Constitution (Rule B1, 2021, pp. 8–9)

The objects of LGNZ are:

- (a) To promote the national interests of local government through the promotion of LGNZ’s vision as approved by the National Council from time to time;
- (b) To advocate on matters affecting the national interests of local government and the communities that it represents;
- (c) To constructively promote and facilitate regular dialogue with Government, Parliamentarians, and the agencies of Government on matters of national interest to local government with a view to enhancing and ensuring a long- term commitment to partnership between central and local government in New Zealand;
- (d) To provide full, accurate and timely information to Member Authorities and associate members on matters affecting local government and LGNZ;
- (e) To research, survey, and investigate those matters in which LGNZ has an interest or a responsibility on behalf of its Member Authorities;
- (f) To provide advice and to deliver education opportunities and training for Member Authorities and others on the role and practices of local government, sound governance and management practices, best practice operational matters, the laws affecting local government, and other matters relevant to local government;
- (g) To hold such conferences and forums as required for the advancement of its objects;
- (h) Generally to do all such other things as may be incidental or conducive to attaining any of the above objects.

Mulholland (1972) noted that local authorities formed LGNZ’s predecessors to effectively express their shared concerns as local government:

Functionally, as far as New Zealand is concerned, the foundation stone of the existence of the associations is the maintenance of a set of relationships with central government and other institutions, which must be adequate to enable them to articulate their views, at whatever point of time, and upon such issues, as is considered necessary (p. 3)

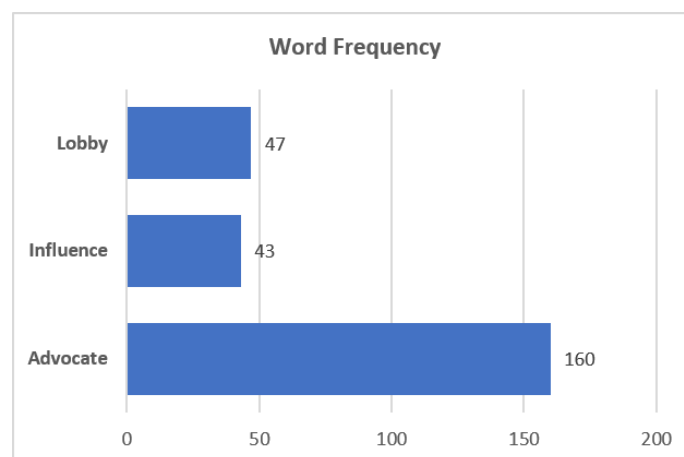
Bush (1995, p. 184) similarly regarded LGNZ as the “official collective persona” of local authorities serving as their “resource centre, a monitoring agency, a crucial point of liaison, and an engine of influence.” In its own words, LGNZ (1999, p. 9) stated that it “exists to further the interests of local democracy and to represent the interests of member authorities and elected members”.

Beyond articulating shared national concerns, Bush (1995) observed that local authorities have sought to present a united front in response to central government power. By acting collectively and drawing on strength in numbers, they may be better positioned to encourage central government to engage with their shared interests:

Central Government is unitary, local government is fragmented. To reduce the disparity in leverage, the latter must mould itself on the former. Whether based on personnel, function, or institution, associations in the local government sphere draw on the precept of strength in unity. The common objectives of their members can be best furthered through a single national organisation formed for that end. (p. 184)

LGNZ (2011a) positions itself at the “interface between government policy and local government regulation” (p. 14), where the independent tiers of the New Zealand government meet and communicate with each other to achieve “the best regulatory outcomes for local government” (LGNZ, 2012a, p. 11).

Figure 6-4 Word frequency: Advocate, influence, lobby
data source: LGNZ Annual Reports 1998-2021



In the association's annual reports spanning from 1998 to 2021, the words 'advocate', 'influence', and 'lobby' occurred at least 250 times (see Figure 6-4 above). The word frequency analysis undertaken for this thesis suggests that acting on behalf of local authorities has figured considerably in the objectives, activities, and accomplishments of LGNZ in the last two decades.

A closer examination of the contexts in which LGNZ used these three words offers further insight (see Table 6-3 below). The phrases that precede and follow these terms suggest that patterns of interest group behaviour commonly observed in New Zealand are evident in LGNZ's activities. For example, lobbying is described in terms of engagement with central government, ministries, and political parties in Parliament. LGNZ also employs familiar lobbying practices, including conducting research, making submissions, and working with government agencies. These observations point to recurring modes of engagement and forms of activity that warrant closer examination to inform the hypotheses tested in this thesis regarding how LGNZ seeks to advance its policy preferences. The following sections examine these practices in more detail.

Table 6-3 Word usage: Advocate, influence, lobby
data source: LGNZ Annual Reports

LGNZ advocates/influences/lobbies...		
When?	Members "resolved", "voted", "requested", or "asked"	
Whom?	Central Government	- "central government's actions and policy" - "government's policy development"
	Ministry or Minister "across the political spectrum" "critical stakeholders"	
Why?	"changes" or "amendments" to	- Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act (2012) - Government Policy for Land Transport
	"develop and implement"	- affordable housing National Policy Statement - plan to eliminate the use of single-use plastics
	"More flexible and innovative policy solutions" and "sensible proposals"	- around Special Economic Zones - on development contributions in infrastructure strategy and planning
	"resources and funding"	- to manage councils' housing stock - for housing development - for tourism and infrastructure services
	"stronger central government support" "strong regional economic development"	

	“greater localism” and “local choice” “proportionate liability”
How?	“with one voice” and “united and empowered communities” “by strengthening sector leadership and policy expertise” “sector-led lobbying” and “lobbying from mayors” “strong lobbying of our President and Chief Executive Officer” “regular liaison meetings” “forming a clear position” “work with Taituarā [SOLGM]” “through collaboration with government agencies and others” “position papers” and “submissions”

6.3.1 “Not just another pressure group”

Being composed of local authorities distinguishes LGNZ from other interest groups. Like most local government associations in other countries, it “represents government, without actually being government” (Chenier, 2009, p. 396). Mulholland (1972) viewed LGNZ’s precursors the other way around: as groups of government entities required to undertake non-governmental work as lobbyists. On this basis, MANZ and NZCA occupied a distinctive position within the New Zealand lobbying landscape, which inspired his study:

[The study] has been prompted by a realisation of the somewhat unique position occupied by groups of this nature. Although they are associations of units of the lower strata of government, in making claims upon the central government, and in defending their position against encroachment from government, they are forced to play a role which is essentially ‘non-governmental’ (Preface).

MANZ President John Thorn (cited in Gilling & Henderson, 2000) also believed that his association was unique for the same reason. However, it was a notion central government lacked appreciation of:

The fact that local government is part of our system of government and not just another pressure group has either been unappreciated or not understood at the central level. (p. 103)

This lack of appreciation of the unique position of local government associations, owing to the nature of their membership, has also been observed elsewhere. For example, Cigler (1994) reported that most county associations in the United States felt they were treated by state governments as ordinary interest groups rather than intergovernmental partners. Association leaders pointed to several factors underpinning this perception, including:

(1) Counties are aggressive lobbyists that represent special interests; (2) county officials compete for legislative seats, which creates animosity (although two directors said that former legislators seek county office); (3) counties are regarded as "administrative arms of the state"; (4) the full scope of county responsibilities and needs is not well understood; and (5) the diversity of counties within a state makes consensus difficult to achieve within the county organization itself, resulting in individual counties lobbying on their own or forming coalitions with other groups to approach the legislature. (p. 5)

At least two of the reasons above are at work in New Zealand as far as local government is concerned. In its submission to the Local Government and Environment Committee, LGNZ (2016b) asserted that local authorities are not central government's administrative arm and called out its serious misinterpretation of what councils do for the country:

Local government is not simply a provider of local services. It is an intrinsic part of a strong and healthy democracy. We must be careful and watchful that its democratic role, including its role to encourage participation of citizens, is not lost without a clear public debate. That we have to state this shows a deep misunderstanding of the role of local government in the minds of the Government and its advisers. (p. 9)

The Productivity Commission (2013) also found that some central government agencies "downplay the largely autonomous nature of local government" in New Zealand democracy and see councils as no different to a regional office (p. 90).

Overall, LGNZ's unique position as a lobbying organisation representing a tier of government may shape both the forms of lobbying it pursues and the constraints it faces. For example,

this status makes the use of insider lobbying tactics a natural mode of influence for the association, as similar bodies elsewhere tend to rely on advantages associated with this position, such as a shared understanding of institutional rules, technical knowledge of local government, and direct access to councils, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2. At the same time, accounts of central government in New Zealand and internationally regarding local government as an administrative arm suggest that insider tactics may not always be sufficient, particularly when policy agendas are advanced with limited regard for local government concerns. Such an attitude towards local government highlights the importance of examining how LGNZ deploys different lobbying tactics and the conditions under which these strategies are more or less effective.

6.4 LGNZ's lobbying resources

Chapter Three (Section 3.5.2) classified an LGA's resources as its financial, legal, political, organisational, and informational assets. These are discussed in the following subsections.

6.4.1 Financial and legal resources

LGAs are generally characterised in the literature as having relatively limited financial resources. LGNZ appears to share this characteristic, as it relies primarily on membership subscriptions for its funding. In terms of legal resources, Reid (2011) argues that the absence of constitutional recognition for local government in New Zealand leaves councils exposed to frequent legislative change, underscoring how their position within the policy process may be constrained. He characterises local authorities as "creatures of statute", a status that enables central government to amend the rules governing them with relative ease, often with limited engagement (p. 4).

6.4.2 Political resources

Section 3.5.2 defined political resources as the formal recognition of an LGA within institutionalised policymaking arrangements and its access to central government. Since its formation, LGNZ aimed to be the unified voice of local government, a goal realised in 2011 when all councils became members. The then President Lawrence Yule emphasised that full membership strengthened LGNZ's influence:

LGNZ now boasts 100 per cent membership of all councils...This gives our organisation strength like no other in local government and assurance that LGNZ can claim greater influence with Government and key stakeholders than any other membership organisation (LGNZ, 2011a, p. 4).

Although LGNZ has since lost universal membership, the 2011 milestone remains significant because it represented the period in which the organisation could most credibly claim to speak on behalf of the entire sector.

LGNZ's legitimacy flows primarily from local government. Comparable features are observed internationally. Chenier (2009, p. 399) contended that in Canada, LGAs derive political strength from "numbers and representativeness", and Isaac-Henry (1980) observed that in the United Kingdom, the governmental status of councils effectively extends to their associations, granting them privileged access despite their formal separation from the state. Mulholland (1972) observed that the predecessors of LGNZ deliberately confined their activities within statutory boundaries to reinforce this legitimacy. He characterised it as *sui generis*, "inborn rather than acquired," an automatic authority conferred by representing local authorities (p. 15).

For LGNZ, this political legitimacy has translated into institutional access. Mulholland (1972) observed that local government associations, while not a formal tier of government, could function as an "adjunct to central government" because of the authorities they represent (p. 15). LGNZ's institutional access is reflected in the recognition it receives from, and the relationships it maintains with, central government agencies. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC, 2019) explicitly recognised LGNZ as a conduit between central and local government, noting the necessity of engaging with local government on policies affecting its finances, planning, compliance burdens, or service responsibilities. The DPMC further emphasised that involving LGNZ early in the policy process is integral to effective policymaking, identifying circumstances where consultation through LGNZ is preferable to engagement with individual councils (see Figure 6-5 below).

Figure 6-5 The role of LGNZ in central–local government relations
source: DPMC (2019, p. 55)

LG NZ is the organisation to contact if you:

- need assistance identifying whether local government needs to be involved in strategic discussions or policy development and problem-solving
- seek a general view from local government about an issue that affects a number of local authorities
- need support for capability building within your agency
- would like an idea about what local government mayors and chief executives think about a particular initiative.

The Department of Internal Affairs (2006), acknowledging the difficulty of engaging directly with multiple local authorities and capturing their concerns in a timely and coherent manner, identified LGNZ as a key participant in the scoping phase of policy development, citing the association’s capacity to provide a political overview, coordinate council input, and assess political acceptability. These acknowledgements demonstrate that LGNZ’s legitimacy not only grants access but also shapes how central government structures consultation.

LG NZ’s institutional access appears to have contributed to its lobbying effectiveness, at least based on its own accounts. LGNZ (2003a) reported that its close working relationship with the government enabled it to become increasingly involved in policy processes across a wide range of issues, creating opportunities to shape policy development. Similarly, LGNZ (1999) characterised its sustained engagement with ministers and officials during the review of the Resource Management Act 1991 as instrumental in advancing local government interests, noting the association’s involvement at each stage of the process and its ongoing interactions with the responsible Minister and the Ministry for the Environment.

6.4.3 Organisational and informational resources

Section 6.2 touched on the roles that LGNZ’s organisational structure and its knowledge of local government play in its lobbying capacity. The structure of the association, including the National Council, reference groups, and the secretariat, has been credited by LGNZ (2001, 2002) for supporting its achievements. Reference groups within this structure provide mechanisms for central government agencies to engage with local government collectively (DIA, 2006; DPMC, 2019) and offer opportunities for councils to present and receive feedback

on proposed regulations or legislation. These reference groups, often composed of political leaders, ensure that presentations and consultations are considered by ministers and senior officials (DPMC, 2019).

Leadership is another crucial organisational resource that facilitates direct engagement with central government. Politicians and officials regularly meet with LGNZ's leaders to discuss high-level policy issues and future directions for local government (CLGF, 2017). Bilateral meetings between the Prime Minister, the Minister for Local Government, and the LGNZ President, alongside annual Central/Local Government Forums co-chaired by the Prime Minister and LGNZ President, exemplify how leadership mediates LGNZ's access to decision-makers (Reid, 2012). These interactions provide a structured avenue for LGNZ to present the collective perspectives of councils, coordinate submissions, and lobby effectively.

LGNZ's informational resources are closely intertwined with its organisational structure and its leadership. LGNZ draws on the expertise and experience of local authorities to inform its policy positions and produce evidence-based submissions that reflect the perspectives of its members. From its early years, the association aimed to be a "credible voice" for local government, strengthening communication and accountability mechanisms to ensure that its work accurately represents councils' views (LGNZ, 2000, pp. 7, 10). Institutionalised consultation mechanisms, such as geographically distributed National Council representation and advisory committees comprising elected and non-elected officials of diverse capacities, further enhance LGNZ's ability to capture and balance the interests of local authorities.

6.4.4 LGNZ's lobbying resources and capacity

LGNZ mainly relies on its political, organisational, and informational resources to navigate the position of its members as creatures of statute. Unlike other interest groups, LGNZ possesses distinctive legitimacy through its representation of a local government. This legitimacy grants the association advantages such as proximity to government institutions and the ability to serve as a policy and political sounding board and as a conduit between central and local authorities. This thesis seeks to understand how these relationships and roles may contribute to LGNZ's lobbying success.

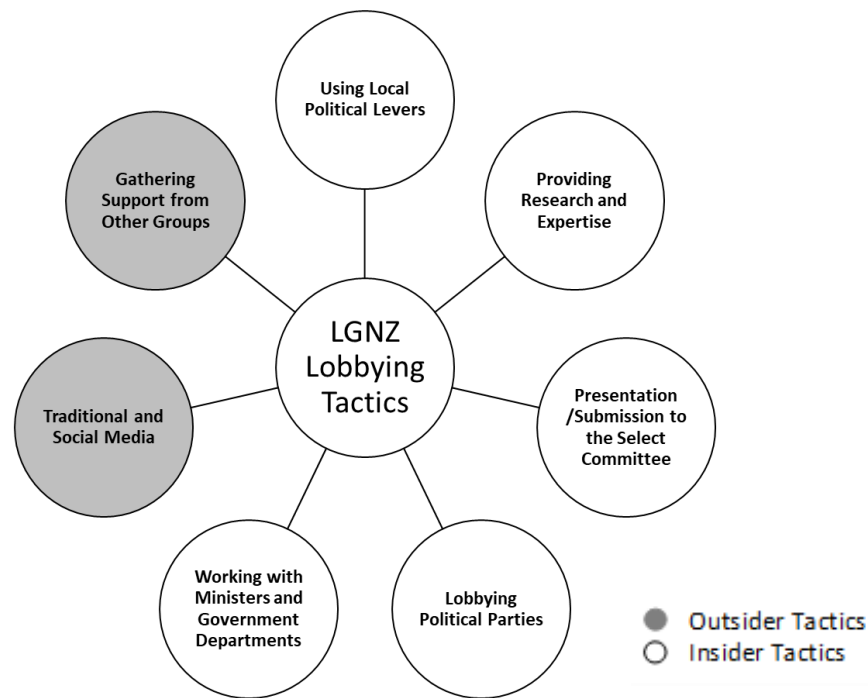
LGNZ's political strength, drawn from council membership, suggests that the association's collective support of local authorities is a factor that should be examined in relation to lobbying outcomes. Similarly, LGNZ's use of technical expertise and the accumulated experience of its members demonstrates how evidence and research can be strategically deployed in lobbying and the potential for such strategies to succeed. Because LGNZ's national leadership mediates access to decision-makers and structures high level engagement with central government, its capacity, relationships, and strategic judgement are also likely to be central to the effectiveness of LGNZ's lobbying efforts.

6.5 LGNZ's lobbying tactics

The ways in which LGNZ lobbies largely depends on its status as the recognised representative of local government. Given its direct access to politicians and government officials, as well as its considerable knowledge of local government, LGNZ is normally involved in the development of policy advice and consultation processes and may therefore have less need to resort to outsider tactics to gain access or exert influence. As such, LGNZ's lobbying activities can be mainly described in terms of how they work with politicians, officials, and agencies at the central government level.

Although it has occasionally employed outsider approaches, LGNZ primarily relies on insider tactics. The association collaborates with other organisations to pool expertise and strengthen its political voice; it also draws on traditional and social media to enhance the reputation of local government and shape public discussion of policy issues. Figure 6–6 below illustrates the breadth of LGNZ's lobbying tactics, and the following sections consider how each of these tools is applied in practice.

Figure 6-6 LGNZ's lobbying toolbox



Most of LGNZ's tactics are grounded in its relationships with actors including central government, officials, political parties, other interest groups, and the media. Documentary evidence indicates that, over the years, LGNZ has built on these relationships to enhance its lobbying success (see Table 6-4 below). Given they are important policy actors and channels of influence for interest groups, as established in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1), the value of relationships with the first three groups listed above could be expected. LGNZ (2010) has itself referred to the political executive and central government agencies as "building blocks" of its lobbying work (p. 1). Other interest groups and the media offer indirect channels of influence that are less emphasised in the New Zealand interest group literature reviewed in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2.2), but, as Table 6-4 shows, remain relevant to the case of LGNZ. Exploring how and why LGNZ works with these actors should reveal more about its lobbying activities. Furthermore, probing the other side of these relationships in terms of the actors' attitudes toward local government should contribute to developing conjectures about said activities. The following sections will cover both.

Table 6-4 Actors LGNZ typically engage with when lobbying
data source: LGNZ Annual Reports

Actors	Documentary Evidence
- Government - Officials	From an operational perspective, developed networks with the Minister of Local Government, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the Government and its departments are the building blocks from which LGNZ seeks to influence favourable outcomes for our member councils. (LGNZ, 2010a, p. 1)
- Government - Media	LGNZ is, without a doubt, becoming more potent in the lobbying sphere. We have built a positive working relationship with central government on a number of key issues and our media presence has increased as a result of LGNZ's communications efforts and new opportunities, services and products. (LGNZ, 2014a, p. 1)
- Government - Political parties - Other groups	This change is in no small part attributable to the work LGNZ and its members do to build constructive relationships with all our stakeholders – across political parties, social and environmental organisations, industry groups and central government. (LGNZ, 2016a, p. 1)
- Government - Officials - Political parties - Other groups	Our work has enabled more robust conversations with both politicians and officials. It has also further strengthened our alliances across the political and media spectrum, positioning LGNZ as a respected voice for our sector. (LGNZ, 2019a, p. 4)
- Government - Officials - Political parties - Other groups	In that time LGNZ, at the direction of its membership, has transformed from a largely policy focused unit into the policy and advocacy organisation it is today. What this means in practice is driving policy thought leadership in the areas that matter for councils and communities and responding to central government led initiatives as they arise. Key to this has been our relationships, be they with key figures in the machinery of central government, iwi, business, and NGOs, as well as with senior policy makers on points of the political spectrum. (LGNZ, 2020b, p. 4)

6.5.1 Insider lobbying

The interest group literature classifies lobbying tactics into two categories: insider and outsider lobbying. The first type refers to activities that aim to directly influence decision-makers while those belonging to the second do so indirectly by influencing public opinion. Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2.2) argued that due in part to the relative accessibility of the New Zealand policymaking process to interest groups, working with policy actors and institutions tends to be the default approach for many lobbying organisations in New Zealand. Is this the case for LGNZ? To answer this question, the succeeding paragraphs turn to evidence from other LGAs abroad, LGNZ's predecessors, and LGNZ as depicted in its annual reports.

Chapter Three (Section 3.5.2) argued that local government associations (LGAs) are primarily direct or insider lobbyists that take advantage of the privileged access to policymaking extended to them through the institutional status of their members. For example, LGAs in

Denmark and the United Kingdom have successfully leveraged technocratic advice and professional expertise to influence complex European Union policymaking (Callanan, 2012). The Association of Netherlands Municipalities has similarly utilised its strong position within established legal and political frameworks to defend its members against centrally imposed budget cuts and policies (de Jesus, 2010; de Widt & Laffin, 2018). In the United States, Jensen (2016) observed that local government lobbyists avoid many lobbying techniques commonly used by private interest groups, such as providing favours to public officials, participating in electoral campaigns, leveraging informal networks, and running advertising campaigns.

Mulholland (1972) found similar behaviour among LGNZ's predecessors but saw this more as a constraint than an advantage. He maintained that MANZ and NZCA did "not have at their disposal many of the weapons which a private organisation could call upon" (Preface). As governmental associations, they had to operate "very much within the rules of the political and social system" (p. 15). This perceived limitation was deemed to be consequent of their "intimacy with the administration...which inhibits the use of certain tactics" (p. 106). However, having to conduct advocacy work within tightly defined parameters should not be regarded necessarily as a limitation. For one, it allows for the development of a focussed and specialised approach to lobbying.

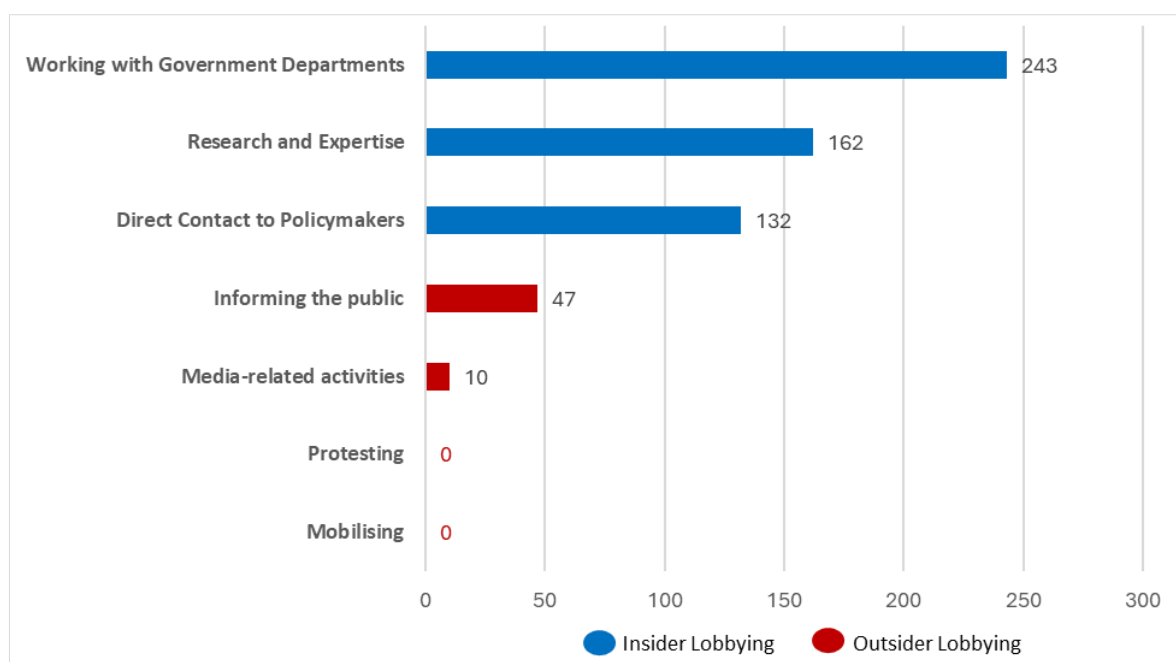
As noted in the literature, a characteristic that sets governmental interest groups from many private interests is a "common understanding of the rules" (Freeman & Nownes, 1999, p. 624). Bush (1995) describes LGNZ as adept in this regard, noting that the association is "experienced at patient submissions, pulling local political levers, and extracting at least some elements of its shopping list" (p. 174). Describing its own advocacy activities, LGNZ (2000) has stated:

Our work includes assessing proposals, undertaking research, contributing to working parties, preparing and making submissions, lobbying and relationship building – and extensive consultation with the sector and reporting back to ensure that our work reflects your views. (p. 21)

As noted in its annual reports, LGNZ organises conferences where central and local government officials meet, provides advice to ministries and government departments on policy proposals, and lodges submissions to the select committee—all strategies designed to work within the existing parameters described above.

Figure 6-7 below presents the results of the content analysis of LGNZ’s annual reports (1998–2021), categorising activities as either insider or outsider lobbying. This classification is based on lists and categories established in previous research (Dür & Mateo, 2016; Tresch & Fischer, 2015). It should be noted that more than half (25/47) of the activities related to “informing the public” revolve around publishing content, “working with government departments” includes holding and participating in meetings, workshops, and technical working groups, and “direct contact to policymakers” involves approaching ministers or select committees.

Figure 6-7 Mentions of activities pertaining to insider and outsider lobbying
data source: LGNZ Annual Reports (1998–2021)



This comparison of the two types of lobbying tactics provides a preliminary indication of the extent to which LGNZ has relied on each over the past two decades. However, annual reports may not capture all lobbying activities, particularly those occurring outside formal channels and processes. Nevertheless, Freeman and Nownes (1999) argue that governmental interest groups are generally less likely to rely on informal contacts or the exchange of favours with public officials.

6.5.1.1 Government/Political executive

Each year, numerous legislative changes are proposed and enacted that directly affect local government (LGNZ, 2000). Acts of Parliament have repeatedly reshaped not only the functions of councils but also the structure of the local government system (Productivity Commission, 2013). These reforms reflect the constitutional reality that authority over local government ultimately resides with the government. As Bush (1995) observed, governments that command a parliamentary majority control legislation, budgets, and departments, leaving local government with the least doubt about where “consents, impediments, and assistance flow from” (p. 174).

Local authorities recognise the government’s lawmaking authority. Former LGNZ President Lawrence Yule explicitly acknowledged that the government determines the legislative framework within which councils operate and LGNZ’s role is to “lobby and advocate” (LGNZ, 2010a, p. 1). However, this recognition by LGNZ has coexisted with a strong conviction that local government embodies community voice and democratic legitimacy that the government must consider. In 2000, LGNZ explicitly framed its advocacy as “Fighting the Legislative Battle” (LGNZ, 2000, p. 7). In 2013, then CEO Malcolm Alexander described the association as one that would “fight to protect local democracy” (LGNZ, 2013a, p. 7). LGNZ has also emphasised the need to be “vocal and brave” to secure positive legislative outcomes (LGNZ, 2014a, p. 1).

Bush (1995) cautioned against portraying the relationship between local and central government as one of constant conflict, noting that it is more often characterised by goodwill, mutual acceptance of roles, and pragmatic compromise. Even so, there are still perceptions of central overreach: Drage (2002) described central government as exhibiting a “self-interested attitude to local government” (p. 98), and LGNZ has criticised the “strong tendency to concentrate decision-making power in the Beehive” (LGNZ, 2019a, p. 7), arguing that politicians and officials have been reluctant to share power with communities (LGNZ, 2019b).

Concerns about centralisation are reinforced by the political handling of the Local Government Portfolio by the ministers responsible for it. The position of this portfolio typically ranks low in Cabinet seniority, and frequent ministerial turnover has limited continuity in central–local relationships (Drage, 2016). This instability was especially

pronounced during the National-led Government of 2008 to 2016, when the portfolio changed hands almost annually. As Yule noted, successive ministerial changes in 2011 and 2012 made that period challenging for both the sector and LGNZ (LGNZ, 2012a). Reid (2018) further suggested that limited engagement by other Cabinet members can leave the Minister of Local Government with substantial unchecked influence over local government policy.

The Productivity Commission (2013) has also observed that local government policymaking frequently falls short of best-practice standards, identifying a “lack of meaningful engagement with local government” as a key weakness (p. 88). It argued that councils should be recognised as “co-producers of regulatory outcomes” and involved earlier in the policy process (p. 89). LGNZ (2019b) has likewise contended that legislative centralisation has increased compliance costs, fragmented service delivery, and left councils vulnerable to “the whims of central government and its ministers” (p. 12). DPMC (2019) acknowledged that legislative impositions from the centre have contributed to rising costs and consultation fatigue across the sector. LGNZ (2010) illustrated these impacts by estimating that councils had spent \$98 million and 750,000 hours complying with just four major legislative initiatives.

Centre-left and centre-right governments and local government policy

Scholars have argued that the relationship between central and local government in New Zealand is strongly shaped by the ideological orientation of governing coalitions, with commentators observing that local government’s role has been repeatedly reshaped across successive administrations. Reflecting on changes in government over the last 30 years, Molineaux and Asquith (2022, p. 322) describe local government in New Zealand as a “political ping pong.” This characterisation was exemplified by the repeated removal and reinstatement of the four well-beings—social, economic, environmental, and cultural—in the statutory purpose of local government under the Local Government Act 2002 across National- and Labour-led Governments. In the absence of constitutional protection, local government remains vulnerable to ideological shifts in central government that lead to the minimalist, efficiency driven reforms under centre-right governments or the broader mandates oriented toward well-being under centre-left governments.

Because the government controls Parliament and the legislative agenda, local authorities remain structurally exposed to the priorities of the political executive, including shifting views on decentralisation, autonomy, and central oversight. These dynamics suggest that the scope for local government influence is contingent on the policy preferences of the government of the day. This subsection examines how New Zealand's major governing coalitions have articulated their approaches to local government, and how these differing orientations shape the institutional context within which LGNZ seeks to advance its policy objectives.

After three terms of MMP, Bush (2006) concluded that policies on local government rest on "tacit, broad inter-party agreement" (p. 168). Thus, it offers insight to review the coalition governments formed under this electoral system, which have largely been described in New Zealand as being centre-left or centre-right.

Examining the shift in power from the National-led Government (1990–1999) to the Labour–Alliance coalition (1999–2008), Drage (2016) speculated that a continued centre-right government would have resulted in a reduced role for local authorities. On the other hand, the emerging centre-left coalition signalled a halt to local government contraction, more local autonomy, and a stronger central-local partnership. Labour indicated in its election manifesto that it would seek changes to local government laws clarifying the role of councils and increasing citizen participation. Ongoing amendments to the Resource Management Act 1991 underpinned by corporate models would not proceed. Alliance, Labour's smaller coalition partner, focused on economic development, local government, and local autonomy.

Reid (2010) agreed that the Labour–Alliance coalition had relatively favourable policy positions on local government, but these were held more by Alliance than Labour. The former aimed to lessen central government's control over local authorities' affairs and create a bigger role for communities in deciding local government's functions. Meanwhile, the latter stuck with familiar themes such as transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration between central and local government.

Drage (2016) suggests that a “command-and-control bureaucratic model” has been the “go-to position” of centre-right governments in New Zealand (p. 18). She observed this tendency during the Fifth National-led Government (2008–2017), including as examples the dismissal of Environment Canterbury councillors in 2010 and the failure to restore full democracy to the regional council as initially indicated. Furthermore, this government introduced legislative measures that changed the purpose of local government (e.g., by removing the four well-beings) and increased central government oversight of local authorities.

Likewise, Reid (2018) recalled a marked increase in managerial and political centralisation under the Fifth National-led Government. In his view, had the Labour–New Zealand First coalition not been elected in 2017, local councils would have been transformed into “little more than toothless infrastructure funders” (p. 4). He saw the 2017 election as one of the most, if not the most, critical elections for local authorities, as they “dodged an existential bullet” with the formation of a new, centre-left coalition government (p.4).

6.5.1.2 Approaching other political parties

Local government in New Zealand is structurally dependent on central government, and this makes councils both vulnerable to shifting policy priorities and reliant on lobbying to promote local interests. A way LGNZ has responded to this vulnerability has been by seeking to engage with all parliamentary parties, regardless of whether they are in government or in opposition, with the aim of influencing the “policy of all parties” on local government issues (LGNZ, 2000, p. 10). This strategy begins prior to elections and continues afterwards, including through early engagement with newly appointed ministers and select committee members. Gilling and Henderson (2000) provide historical precedent for this approach, noting that sustained lobbying of the National Party while they were in opposition helped LGNZ’s predecessor, the NZCA, secure a dilution of the Local Government Act 1974 following a change of government.

Despite the proportional nature of MMP, Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1.3) has shown that governing parties effectively control Parliament, making targeted party lobbying context dependent. Changes of government can halt proposals introduced by their predecessors, as occurred during the resource management reform process, when provisions opposed by local government were signalled as unlikely to proceed under a new administration (LGNZ, 2000).

Engagement with opposition parties can be advantageous where future policy reversal is likely. For example, the Labour-led Government reinstated the four well-beings in the Local Government Act in 2019 after their removal by the previous National-led Government in response to long-standing local government opposition to those changes (LGNZ, 2019c).

Regardless of the likelihood of policies reversing with changes of government, interest groups cannot rely on electoral turnover to achieve their policy goals. Their primary strategy must be to engage with the government of the day. First-hand accounts discussed in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1.3) indicate that consultation and negotiation occur predominantly within governing coalitions rather than from outside them. In this context, LGNZ has also pursued influence through members of support or coalition parties that hold leverage at the margins of government formation. Following the 2017 general election, LGNZ reported that extensive cross-party lobbying had positioned it to influence coalition negotiations, with several of the association's manifesto positions taken up in the resulting agreements (LGNZ, 2018a).

The receptiveness of political parties to local government concerns varies, in part due to ideological alignment and policy position. To illuminate this further, Table 6-5 below presents how New Zealand's major political parties are characterised ideologically as well as how they articulated their policy positions on local government, based on available academic sources published between 2009 and 2015 and data collated in 2020 as part of the general election campaign by Policy.nz, an online voter information platform that draws on official party websites, policy documents, press releases, and social media posts.

The language used in the materials featured in Table 6-5 is revealing. Parties differed in how they conceptualised the balance between central and local authority. For example, the Green Party, which aligns ideologically with participatory democracy, employed more collaborative terms such as "strengthen," "cooperate," and "support," while the ACT Party favoured more directive language, including "require," "ban," and "allow." Other parties adopted more ambiguous positions, using terms such as "review" or "investigate." Positions also varied by policy area. The National Party, for instance, supported centralising the building consent process while simultaneously advocating increased funding for Auckland local boards.

Table 6-5 Policy views on local government by key New Zealand political parties

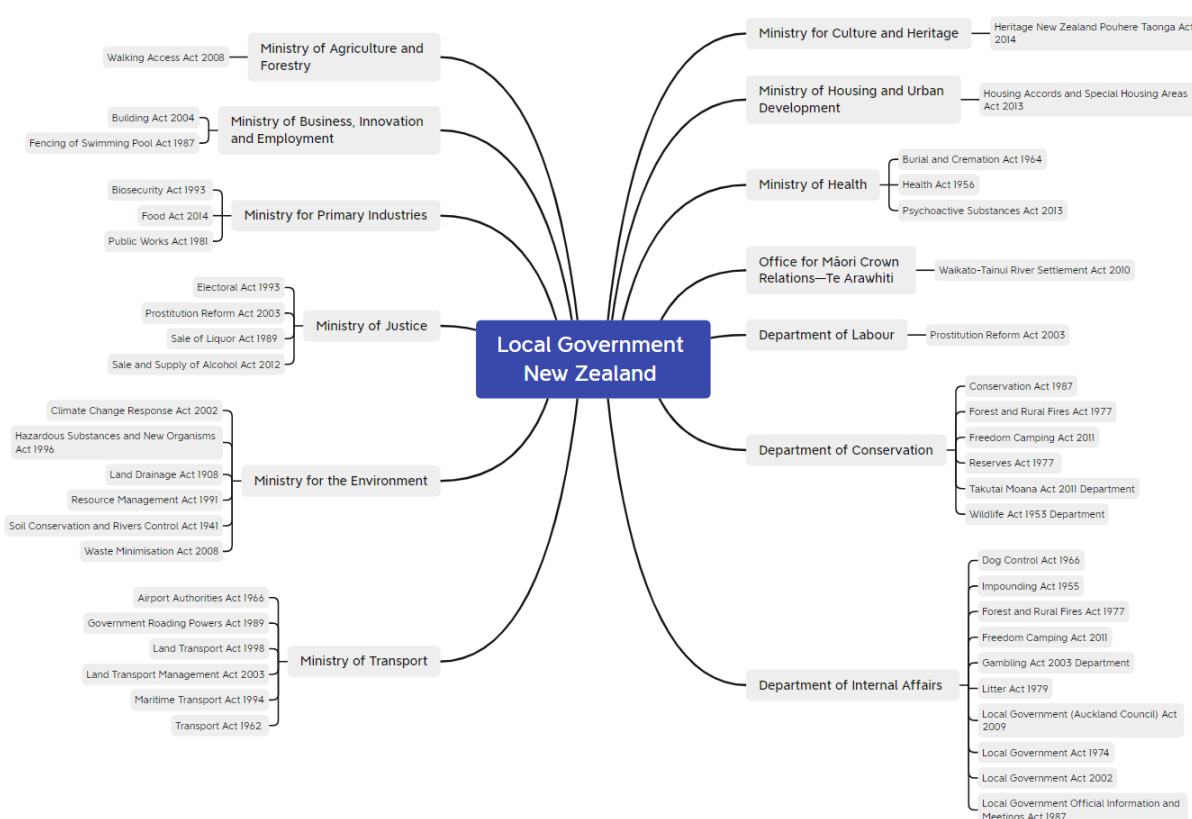
Political Party	Ideological positions as characterised in the literature	Policies on Local Government source: Policy.nz (2020)
ACT	- Free market and climate change scepticism (Buckle, 2009) - Deregulation and privatisation of publicly owned assets (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011) - Received implicit endorsement from National in the Epsom electorate (ACT's lifeline to Parliament) in 2011 and 2014 (Edwards, 2015)	- Require councils to commit to water quality objectives and upgrade water infrastructure - Ban councils from imposing bed tax - Allow councils to use targeted rates to pay for infrastructure for new housing developments
Green	- "Participatory democracy" (Ford, 2015, p. 231) - Came from Alliance, a coalition of left-wing parties that aimed to roll back the neoliberal reforms in the 1980s (Edwards, 2015)	- Strengthen council powers to improve housing affordability in new developments - Cooperate with councils on waste issues - Support local councils to fund rainwater tanks
Labour	- "lightly more room for the state in the economy" than National (Aimer, 2015, p. 209) - Expansionist approach to the management of the economy (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011)	- Standardise kerbside recycling nationwide - Strengthen the Local Government Commission - Ensure major decisions about local democracy involve full participation of the local population - Continue to work with local government to provide infrastructure for housing
Māori	- Kaupapa Māori politics sometimes seen as political pragmatism (Godfrey, 2015)	- Prevent local government Māori wards from being overturned
National	- "Limited government" (James, 2015, p. 225) - Deregulation and privatisation of publicly owned assets (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011)	- Review Auckland Council governance arrangements - Centralise the building consent process - Increase funding for Auckland local board priority projects
New Zealand First	- A political pragmatist, NZ First has a policy toolbox with policies to fit the left and right, depending on who it is working with (Joiner, 2015)	- Investigate establishing an infrastructure fund - Oppose the establishment of Māori wards in local government - Review local government structures - Review the burden central government places on local government

6.5.1.3 Working with government officials

LGNZ also engages with government officials, which provides technical input shaping policy direction and formulation. Local government operates under statutes issued by central government; over 150 pieces of national legislation regulate its activities (DPMC, 2019). These laws are administered and reviewed by different government agencies (Productivity

Commission, 2013), requiring LGNZ to interact with a wide range of departments. Figure 6–8 depicts this scope, showing laws affecting local government and the agencies responsible for them. Mulholland (1972, p. 13) noted that the proliferation of these “administrative web units” created opportunities for close engagement between government agencies and LGNZ’s predecessors.

Figure 6-8 Laws connecting LGNZ and administering agencies
data source: DPMC (2019)



Note: A high-resolution copy is provided in Appendix C

Much of LGNZ’s advocacy involves engagement with ministries and other government agencies. Regular meetings occur throughout the year between officials and local government representatives, including mayors. While not legally mandated to do so, agency officials often consult with local government when reviewing policies or drafting new legislation (CLGF, 2017). Table 6–6 below illustrates how LGNZ’s collaboration with different agencies enables its participation across multiple stages of the policymaking process. LGNZ’s annual reports further credit many legislative achievements for local authorities to these partnerships with central government.

Table 6-6 Examples of LGNZ's collaboration with central government agencies
data source: LGNZ Annual Reports

Policymaking stage (Agency)	Documentary Evidence
Reviewing Existing Laws (LGC)	[LGNZ] contributed to the Local Government Commission's assessment of the Local Government Act 2002 and Local Electoral Act 2001. Following a series of regional workshops held in 2006, a submission on desired changes was forwarded to the Commission along with a submission from SOLGM. (LGNZ, 2008, p. 7)
Drafting Legislative Proposals (DIA and MfE)	Following a remit from LGNZ's 2010 AGM, work got underway to address council concerns about freedom camping. In consultation with the Department of Internal Affairs and the Ministry for the Environment, a Bill addressing these concerns has been developed for introduction to Parliament. (LGNZ, 2011a, p. 13) LGNZ's engagement with Ministry for the Environment on climate change has increased significantly. LGNZ and MfE have agreed that LGNZ will assist during [2018] consultation on the draft Zero Carbon Bill and will work closely on the Government's adaptation work programme. (LGNZ, 2018a, p. 8)
Vetting Legislative Proposals i.e., 2nd Reading (MoJ)	The [2010] Alcohol Reform Bill had its second reading in September 2011. The Bill has a number of implications for local government and has the stated intention of empowering local communities to decide on the concentration, location and opening hours of alcohol outlets in their areas. LGNZ supported the Ministry of Justice in its work on the local government implications of the Bill. (LGNZ, 2012a, p. 8)

Despite its efforts, LGNZ's working relationships with central government agencies vary considerably, and these differences may shape its lobbying outcomes. The Productivity Commission (2013) noted that some national agencies treat local authorities primarily as agents of central government. Similarly, Wallis and Dollery (2000) identified agencies whose policy orientations conflict with local government's aspirations, most notably the Treasury, which frames its approach around economic theories emphasising government failures. By contrast, other agencies have maintained relatively constructive relationships with local government. Wallis and Dollery (2000) consider functional agencies such as the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) as generally supportive. Reid (2018) illustrates how the support of such agencies can bolster LGNZ's advocacy, noting that DIA "tried valiantly to inject some sanity into the debate" during the 2012 'Better Local Government' reform programme and produced a Regulatory Impact Statement that questioned the evidence underpinning the proposed reforms (p. 11).

6.5.1.4 Presentation and submission to select committees

As noted in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1.4) select committee deliberation is a key stage in the legislative process for New Zealand interest groups that offers a formal opportunity to propose amendments. Select committees review all bills, including local bills promoted by councils and other legislation affecting local government (Productivity Commission, 2013). LGNZ documents demonstrate confidence in the select committee process as a means by which to secure legislative wins. For example, its report on the 2006 Health (Drinking Water) Amendment Bill highlights that collaboration with the Health Select Committee had helped the association to “gain concessions” on the proposed legislation (LGNZ, 2007, p. 7).

Even where other opportunities exist to shape legislation, LGNZ continues its lobbying through the select committee stage. As the 2007 Land Transport Management Amendment Bill was being developed, the association worked with the Ministry of Transport and Land Transport New Zealand and subsequently lodged a submission to the select committee during the second reading stage (LGNZ, 2008). Working with government officials and then the select committee allowed LGNZ to engage with a new set of policy actors, secure gains, and advance other policy priorities.

However, participation in the select committee process does not always produce favourable outcomes. In its annual report, LGNZ (2013a) noted that, during the second reading of the 2012 Land Transport Management Amendment Bill, it “provided a comprehensive submission on the Bill but was extremely disappointed at the way in which submitters on the Bill...were treated during the hearings process” (p. 13).

6.5.1.5 Research and expertise

LGNZ (2000) identifies three key sources of its credibility as the national advocate for local authorities: its relationships with central government agencies, its communication with ministers and MPs, and the quality of its research and submissions. While LGNZ’s membership provides legitimacy and access to policymakers, influencing outcomes requires more than access. As LGNZ (2019a) notes, central government must also be persuaded by the “merits of an idea” (p. 7), making research both the foundation and the currency of effective advocacy.

Former CEO Malcolm Alexander observed that “an engaged membership makes for a united and powerful force in policy-making circles” (LGNZ, 2016a, p. 2) This is an LGNZ principle that extends to research, as LGNZ draws on the “knowledge and in the sector” to inform submissions (LGNZ, 2012a, p. 4). Examples include collaboration with local authorities and sector groups on the 2006 Waste Bill (LGNZ, 2007) and developing recommendations for the Government’s Essential Water proposals using 13 regional case studies from Northland to Southland (LGNZ, 2020b).

Each year, LGNZ (2000) undertakes research “to influence government policy” (p. 21), and this research supports its lobbying strategies at multiple stages. Well-prepared submissions have been credited with securing legislative wins at the select committee stage:

Our focus is on getting the best outcomes for councils when regulation is developed. The quality of our submissions is consistently recognised in select committees and many of our recommendations adopted. (LGNZ, 2010, p. 5)

Research also informs LGNZ’s public communications, which aim to foster “a more facts-based and balanced debate” through media statements, letters, interviews, and social media (LGNZ, 2012, p. 14).

Effective lobbying requires not only strong evidence but also strategic presentation. Interest groups must consider who their audience is and how arguments are framed. LGNZ swears by producing “high-quality, data-driven reports, publications, and submissions” to support its advocacy and maintain a voice in “many conversations being held at the highest levels of government” (LGNZ, 2019a, p. 4). It also adapts to changing political contexts, commissioning a “zero-slate reassessment” of proposals following the Labour–Alliance Government’s election to align its approach with the new policy environment (LGNZ, 2000, p. 12).

LGNZ’s advocacy is guided by principles such as local democracy, autonomy, and diversity, which shape the assessment of new legislation. For instance, LGNZ’s emphasis on local and fiscal autonomy informed its position on council funding issues (LGNZ, 2011a):

For almost a decade, our capacity-building advocacy focused on asking government to put more money on the table, contribute to the compliance costs it was imposing on councils, and make transfers to help resource unfunded mandates. Given the current state of central government finances, the message through 2010/11 was increasingly one of financial self-reliance and the need for efficiencies in process deliveries. (p. 7)

Chapter Seven will further investigate patterns in how LGNZ communicates its policy preferences by examining some of its submissions to Parliament.

6.5.1.6 Using local political levers

As Bush (1995) claims, pulling local political levers is part of LGNZ's lobbying repertoire. One way the association does this is by encouraging locally elected members to be their own advocates. LGNZ leverages its members' political status by, for instance, organising forums involving central and local government officials. A quintessential example of these events is the Central/Local Government Forum, discussed in Section 6.4.3. The annual LGNZ Conference also provides an opportunity for central and local government officials to talk about specific policy issues: regional economic development and freshwater management were discussed at this conference in 2010 and 2017, respectively (LGNZ 2011; 2018).

Another way LGNZ leverages the influence of its members is by requesting local authorities to lodge individual submissions to select committees in support of the association's policy position. In 2017, an open letter from 65 mayors and regional chairs to the Associate Minister for Environment helped secure a commitment from major supermarket chains to phase out single-use plastic bags (LGNZ, 2018a). In 2019, LGNZ undertook a joint submission across all local governments to amplify its voice in the formulation of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, resulting in the proposals in this Statement being trialled first at the council level (LGNZ, 2020b).

A third political lever LGNZ can pull involves personal lobbying by local politicians. Perhaps the best example of this was the appearance of 15 mayors before the select committee to oppose some aspects of the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2 (LGNZ, 2017a), one of which was the provision to enable the Local Government Commission (LGC) to create

substantive and multiply owned council-controlled organisations (CCOs) without due agreement from local councils. That provision did not proceed when the Bill became law in 2019.

Local politicians constitute the leadership of LGNZ, which means that the association can leverage their political skills and networks when lobbying. Demonstrating this advantage, former LGNZ President Lawrence Yule recognised the skilful advocacy of his colleagues, which had contributed to the Government agreeing to share the cost of addressing the leaky homes crisis, which was then estimated to be around \$11 billion:

Here I would like to commend the work done by Wellington Mayor and LGNZ Vice President Kerry Prendergast and Auckland Mayor John Banks for their tireless, resolute and absolutely rational approach. They drove this issue determined to get the best results for our sector, but with the greatest tact, diplomacy and delicacy. (LGNZ, 2010a, p. 1)

6.5.2 Outsider lobbying

LGNZ can sometimes clash with central government on policy issues. When it does, LGNZ has been observed to use outsider lobbying tactics to amplify its voice. The subsections that follow address the outsider lobbying tactics employed at such times.

6.5.2.1 Media advocacy

LGNZ (2019a) describes how it used the media to amplify its opposition to what it viewed as a centralisation policy in the Three Waters Reform:

Where appropriate, we have been vocal in calling out the Government's moves to further centralise decision-making across, for example, three waters...in our media advocacy, our position is clear – a constant default to a one-size-fits-all policy is holding our communities back. (p. 3)

LGNZ (2014) maintains an active media presence through regular communications and proactive media activities. The association's annual reports set out three purposes for LGNZ's

media strategy, all of which revolve around lobbying. The first purpose is to boost and maintain LGNZ's reputation as an advocate of local authorities:

We review, refine and assess our communications approaches to ensure LGNZ's reputation as the voice of local government and champion of local democracy is maintained and improved. (LGNZ, 2012a, p. 15)

The second is to initiate a public debate about policy issues on local government and to steer the public discourse in a direction that is favourable to its members:

Debates that LGNZ initiated on matters such as new revenue sources for local government, regional development, and infrastructure regulation to name three, have entered the mainstream and now are regularly promoted by many persons and organisations. (LGNZ, 2017a, p. 1)

The third is to lobby on specific pieces of legislation. Media campaigns developed for this purpose are often done in conjunction with insider tactics. For example, LGNZ (2014) took a two-fold approach and "lobbied via media and the Electoral and Justice Select Committee" for online voting to make casting one's vote easily accessible to communities (p. 9). Additionally, the extensive submission LGNZ (2020b) made on the 2019 Climate Change Response (Zero-Carbon) Amendment Bill was "supported by a range of media commentary" to highlight the need for a strong adaptation framework in this Bill (p. 15).

6.5.2.2 Working with other groups

LGNZ (2015a) recognises the value of partnering with other organisations to advance its mission of supporting local government and strengthening council performance. For example, LGNZ (2014) reported regular engagement with stakeholder groups across a wide range of policy areas, including transport funding, local regulation, the Resource Management Act (RMA), financial prudence benchmarks, local alcohol and psychoactive substances policies, the 2013 Food Bill, and regulatory reforms related to online consenting and earthquake-prone buildings.

LGNZ's annual reports imply several purposes for such outsider engagement. One is to increase pressure on central government by aligning with other stakeholders on policy issues. For example, LGNZ (1999) responded to its perceived exclusion from the review of the Building Act (1991) by liaising closely with the Building Industry Association, successfully ensuring that "the views of local government [were] reflected" in the Ministry of Commerce's review, despite its limited initial consultation with councils (p. 3).

More recently, LGNZ (2020b) partnered with Museums Aotearoa to jointly advocate for central government funding for council-operated museums and galleries. A needs assessment conducted among territorial authorities informed a letter to then Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who also held the Arts, Culture, and Heritage portfolio. This advocacy was followed by the Government's announcement of a two-million-dollar Museum Hardship Fund to be administered by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington.

Another purpose of partnership is to gain access to key policymaking venues. LGNZ (2020b) reported being able to deliver a local government perspective at the highest levels of government through its relationships with non-government organisations. These included participation in the National Science Challenges, the Joint Community Resilience Work Programme, and the National Climate Change Risk Assessment. In the same year, LGNZ also collaborated with Taituarā — Local Government Professionals Aotearoa on a joint media initiative, publishing an opinion piece titled "When the going gets tough, councils get going."

The most common rationale for working with other groups, however, is to pool expertise. LGNZ has collaborated with a range of organisations to undertake research, prepare submissions, and draft legislative proposals, thereby enhancing both the technical quality and legitimacy of its advocacy. Taituarā has been a consistent partner in this regard, cooperating on amendments to acts including the Local Election and Polls Act 1976 (LGNZ, 2000) and the Local Government Act 2002 (LGNZ, 2007, 2010). In 2012, LGNZ partnered teamed up with Ingenium and Taituarā to develop the Three Waters work programme, providing advice to councils on drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater reform (LGNZ, 2013a). Similarly, LGNZ and Tourism Industry Aotearoa collaborated in the administration of a 2016 survey that identified 600 infrastructure projects to support sustainable tourism growth, which was

followed by an increase in the Regional Mid-sized Tourism Facilities Fund to \$102 million over four years (LGNZ, 2017a).

While highlighting their value to the association, LGNZ acknowledges that partnerships can be constrained by ideological differences. As noted in its annual report, some lobby groups promote societal changes that “ignore or override the importance of local democracy” and communities’ ability to shape their own local agendas (LGNZ, 1999, p. 5).

These tensions reflect broader divisions in New Zealand’s local government policy landscape. Reviewing debates surrounding the Local Government Amendment Act 1989, Wallis and Dollery (2000, 2001) identified a conflict between business groups and local government representatives (see Table 6-7 below). Business groups advanced a minimalist perspective, framing local authorities as extensions of central government with responsibility for a narrow set of functions to limit rate increases and protect economic competitiveness. In contrast, local government representatives articulated an activist perspective, viewing councils as an independent sphere of government whose legitimacy derives from responding to community needs and aspirations. From this standpoint, local authorities are expected to play a proactive role in advancing local economic and social outcomes, rather than merely meeting a minimum standard of governance.

Table 6-7 Rival advocacy coalitions in the local government policy subsystem
source: Wallis and Dollery (2000, p. 29)

	Minimalist advocacy coalition	Activist advocacy coalition
Key players	Business Roundtable, manufacturers, “centralist” politicians, and some smaller rural councils.	Local Government Association, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Internal Affairs, voluntary organisations, large urban councils.
Underlying theories	Public choice, agency theory, the “new institutional economics”.	“Bottom-up” theories of governance; social capital theory.
Assumptions about Agents	Fiscally irresponsible when accountability is weak.	Responsibly concerned with capacity to cope with multiple pressures.
Institutional preferences	- Public company - State-owned enterprise with single profit goal - Central government department strictly accountable for specific output	Democratically elected local body in horizontal partnership with a range of government agencies and non-government organisations.

	Minimalist advocacy coalition	Activist advocacy coalition
	• Local government	
Proposed directions for local government policy	• Statutory obligation to focus on “core” activities according to “residuality” principle. • Funding according to “benefits” principle.	• Devolution according to the principle of “subsidiarity”. • Predictable funding as the basis for central-local trust.

The ideological differences between these two coalitions remained after the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s (Wallis & Dollery, 2001). Regardless of the extent of reform that had taken place, there persisted overt and covert efforts at reducing the role and size of local government, primarily driven by the business community, which continued to push for its contraction (Drage, 2002). Reid (2016) similarly observed tensions between local government peak bodies and business groups in contemporary reforms. Comparable dynamics are evident internationally, where LGAs have been observed to conflict with the interests of private groups (see de Widt & Laffin, 2018).

6.5.3 LGNZ’s lobbying tactics and capacity

LGNZ’s lobbying tactics are closely tied to the resources it can mobilise. As noted earlier, the association has comparatively limited legal and financial leverage, which heightens the importance of resources that can function directly within the policy process. LGNZ’s predominantly insider orientation and reliance on legitimacy, access, and coordination to advance its policy objectives can therefore be understood as an adaptation to these structural constraints. At the same time, this insider focus does not preclude the selective use of outsider tactics where these can reinforce LGNZ’s influence or compensate for limits within formal decision-making venues.

LGNZ’s emphasis on direct engagement with ministers, select committees, and administering agencies reflects the practical expression of its political resources. The distinct legitimacy derived from representing a tier of government provides not only routine access to formal policymaking processes but also shapes the forms of influence that are considered appropriate and credible. LGNZ’s reliance on technical expertise, research, and sector knowledge reflects the earlier discussion of its role as a credible voice for local government.

Given the reality of a particular government's dominance stemming from its parliamentary majority, LGNZ may need to adopt a pragmatic approach to lobbying and work within the government's policy intent rather than challenge it outright. The association's engagement across parties, including coalition and support partners, may also reflect a strategic effort to identify institutional openings within the parliamentary landscape rather than rely solely on engagement with the political executive.

6.6 Moving forward

This chapter has examined LGNZ's organisational profile and lobbying behaviour to identify factors that are potentially associated with its lobbying success. Analysis of LGNZ's annual reports and supplementary documents indicates that LGNZ, being the national advocate of local authorities, largely operates as an insider lobbyist. This observation is consistent with how similar associations are characterised in the LGA literature.

The discussion suggests that LGNZ's lobbying outcomes are likely to be shaped by the structural and political context in which it operates. In particular, the ideological orientation of governing coalitions may condition the opportunities available to local government advocacy, with centre-left administrations potentially offering a more favourable environment. Select committees and administering agencies appear to function as important institutional intermediaries through which LGNZ may seek to shape policies, while support from coalition or minor parties could enhance leverage at key decision points.

Some organisational factors also emerge as potentially significant. LGNZ's insider status and its capacity to mobilise sector-wide knowledge point to the strategic importance of research, oral testimony, and collective council support in strengthening the credibility its policy position. Leadership may further mediate these processes. As LGNZ officials engage with senior decision-makers, personal networks and expertise may condition how organisational resources are translated into outcomes.

Overall, these findings clarify how LGNZ operates as an advocate and indicate the resources and relationships it draws on in its pursuit of influence. In examining these features of the association, the chapter has also briefly touched on the importance of the issues LGNZ

chooses to prioritise and how these are framed. The next chapter turns more directly to issue-based factors, examining LGNZ's lobbying agenda and how the characteristics of the issues it advances may shape its lobbying outcomes.

Many bodies, one voice: Examining local authorities' collective policy interests through LGNZ

7.1 Introduction

This chapter uses content analysis to examine the policy issues that bring local authorities together in collective advocacy in New Zealand. Previous research addressing this question has typically focused on the advocacy work of local government associations (LGAs) as a way of identifying shared concerns among local governments (e.g., Cigler, 1995; Hays, 1991; Mulholland, 1972; Shott, 2015). These associations provide a platform through which local governments express their positions on national policy proposals and coordinate their advocacy efforts (Nugent, 2006)

Mulholland (1972) observed that LGNZ's predecessors aggregated and articulated local government interests so that these could be considered in policymaking. LGNZ has taken on this role of articulation, often claiming in its parliamentary submissions to be the unified voice of local government. The "Review into the future for local government" (2022), commissioned by the Sixth Labour Government (2017—2023) as a basis for reforms, saw LGNZ as a forum for local authorities to come together and address matters of shared interest.³ Acting as the national advocate for local government, LGNZ also coordinates insights and influences Government policy.

7.1.1 Chapter organisation

This chapter aims to identify and categorise LGNZ's key policy priorities, principles, and advocacy strategies, analysing the tools and modes of engagement it uses. Drawing on annual policy priorities, remits, and parliamentary submissions, the chapter traces recurring patterns that define LGNZ's lobbying agenda to establish an empirical basis for understanding how

³ The Future for Local Government Review Panel comprised Jim Palmer (Chair, former Waimakariri District Council Chief Executive), Penny Hulse (former Auckland Council Deputy Mayor), Gael Surgenor (community and social innovation leader), Antoine Coffin (Māori resource management specialist), and John Ombler (former Deputy State Services Commissioner).

these issue-based features may be associated with lobbying outcomes in subsequent analysis. As in the previous chapter, LGNZ documents are treated as strategic materials rather than neutral accounts and used to observe how the association typically frames issues, presents expertise, and positions itself vis-à-vis central government. Insights from available studies of similar associations and on the state of local government in New Zealand also ground the interpretation of LGNZ's practices.

The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows. To provide a foundation for analysing LGNZ's lobbying agenda, Section 7.2 revisits existing research on LGAs and outlines the New Zealand local government context. Section 7.3 examines the mechanisms LGNZ uses to bring together the diverse interests of its members into a collective position, and Section 7.4 considers the internal and external challenges that shape this process. Section 7.5 then presents the policy priorities that emerge from the analysis of LGNZ documents. Section 7.6 draws these strands together, establishing an empirical basis for the statistical analysis of lobbying success in the following chapter. Section 7.7 concludes by outlining the next steps for this thesis.

7.2 Contextualising the analysis of LGNZ's agenda

7.2.1 Previous research on local governments' collective interests

Local governments' policy interests can be "surprisingly broad" (De Soto, 1995, p. 190), as their involvement in policymaking is shaped more by geography than by function. A small number of studies, mainly from the United States, have explored the interests of such collectives. For instance drawing on survey data, the same author identified tax and revenue, the environment, crime, education, and labour relations as key state-level legislative issues for American city and municipal leagues. Using the structure of US legislative committees to systematically classify local government concerns, Hays (1991) analysed the frequency with which intergovernmental lobbying groups testified before certain committees and found they were most active in policy areas such as the environment, transportation, welfare, and housing.

Cigler (1994), classifying specific policy requests from American county associations, discovered four areas where changes are most frequently sought: structure,

intergovernmental arrangements, substantive policy issues, and internal operations. An association's *structural change agenda* reflects the goal of changing the power of counties within a state. Examples include allowing counties to levy a specific tax, granting counties regulatory authority, and the state assuming the cost of traditional county functions. *Intergovernmental arrangements* pursue desired changes in operational structures between levels of government, such as state-imposed mandates and the implementation of state-issued regulations. *Substantive policy issues* focus on programmatic concerns (e.g., funding or facilities) across policy areas in which counties are involved, such as education or transportation, and *internal operations* largely aim to give counties more management flexibility through, for example, changes to state laws or regulations that allow counties to repurpose revenues, change their bookkeeping system, or enter group purchasing agreements. From her analysis, Cigler discovered that the structural change agenda was the most popular among county associations, with revenue recovery being the most advocated item.

In New Zealand, Mulholland (1972) identified three types of requests that LGNZ's predecessors, discussed in Chapter Six (Section 6.2.1), made on behalf of local authorities. The first, which he found to be rarely accepted by central government at the time, sought to alter the distribution of resources, powers, or functional responsibilities between central and local government. The second involved issues specific to an individual local authority that were presented through the associations to obscure their individualistic nature; these did not constitute a significant portion of the lobbying agendas of these associations. The third category, which dominated their advocacy efforts, encompassed universally applicable but non-jurisdictional matters, such as dog registration, noxious weed control, or increased penalties for overloading trucks.

Shott (2017) found that an LGA's membership composition is a factor shaping its lobbying agenda. She observed that Canadian associations composed of similar types of local governments were more likely to pass resolutions urging action by higher levels of government. In contrast, heterogeneous associations more frequently advocated either for sole municipal responsibility or for shared governance with higher authorities. Homogeneous associations, whose members were more likely to share common interests, found it easier to

identify collective priorities. Hays (1991) also found that an LGA's membership composition influenced its lobbying agenda. American state-level associations concentrated their efforts on policy areas where they sought to avoid responsibility or involvement, particularly redistributive and regulatory programmes, to maintain federal authority. Demonstrating an inverse lobbying pattern, city-based associations lobbied on issues over which they wished to assert jurisdiction.

7.2.2 The state of local government in New Zealand

7.2.2.1 Features

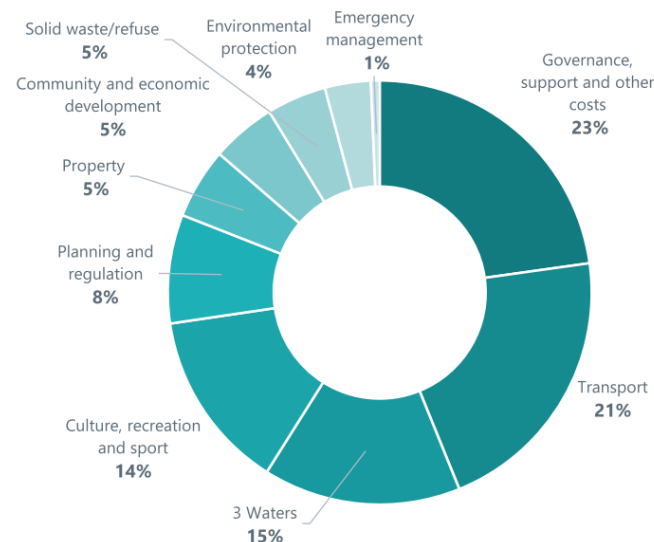
Local government varies across many measures, including territory, population, and capability ("Review into the future for local government," 2021), and the responsibilities of a local authority depends on its type. Regional councils manage built and natural environments within their boundaries and undertake cross-border activities that may necessitate a regional, integrated approach. City and district councils constitute territorial authorities, which have a broader set of responsibilities including local infrastructure such as roads and water services; land use planning and construction requirements; leisure, cultural activities, and amenities; and some public health and safety. Unitary authorities, such as Auckland Council, carry out the functions of both territorial and regional councils. Finally, community boards, known in Auckland as local boards, represent and advocate for their constituents.

The enactment of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA02) formally recognised local government's role in promoting community wellbeing (Asquith et al., 2021). Under this legislation, local authorities were empowered to act within its provisions to enhance the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of their communities—collectively known as the four well-beings—an expanded mandate that significantly broadened the scope of local government activities beyond the traditional concerns of the three Rs—rates, roads, and rubbish (Cheyne, 2008). For instance, local authorities' involvement in areas such as economic development reflects the expectations set by the LGA02 (Nel, 2015). While the role councils play in fostering community wellbeing is often praised, it also places additional pressure on their limited resources, particularly as they remain largely funded through rates. The four well-beings were first added under a Labour-led Government, removed in 2012

under a National-led Government, reinstated in 2019 under a Labour-led Government, and are now set to be removed again under the current National-led Government (Hughes, 2025).

Figure 7-1 Local government operational expenditures

source: Te Waihanga (2022)



The operating expenditure published in 2022 and presented in Figure 7-1 above shows local government functions and the relative money spent on each. The largest expenditure category is infrastructure (i.e., water services and transport combined) followed by governance costs (expenses required to run a council and its committees and prepare local plans). Investments in different facets of community well-being (e.g., culture, recreation, and sport; economic development; and environmental protection) also constitute a significant slice of the expenditure pie.

Local authorities in New Zealand operate with fiscal independence from central government (Productivity Commission, 2013). Aside from funding for roads, they receive minimal financial support from central government. With limited central government funding and a high reliance on locally raised revenue, New Zealand’s local government has a level of autonomy uncommon in many other countries (Cheyne, 2008). This independence is often praised, with some describing the position of New Zealand’s local authorities as “enviable” (Asquith et al., 2021, p. 80). Despite the facts that local authorities are primarily accountable to their communities and their relationship with central government is defined by specific legislative frameworks, these bodies are viewed as both agents of and accountable to central government (Productivity Commission, 2020).

7.2.2.2 Challenges

Calls for greater autonomy have been one of the most prevailing themes to emerge from New Zealand local authorities since the late 1980s, as reforms saw central government distancing itself from social services and economic development functions and communities calling upon local government to fill the void (Drage, 2002). Despite these calls, the "Review into the future for local government" (2021) reported that central government fails to appreciate the independence of local government and expects it to "unquestioningly implement national policies" (p. 38).

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC, 2019) recognised that many of the challenges local authorities experience are in part due to the requirements imposed by central government. The responsibilities of these authorities have substantially extended since the amalgamation and the passage of the LGA02 ("Review into the future for local government," 2021). They must cope with more complicated social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues. At the same time, they must meet higher regulatory standards and more complex criteria for public engagement and decision-making.

The LGA02 is just one of several Acts of Parliament under which local authorities have obligations, each of which has its own set of objectives and processes. According to the Productivity Commission (2020), these laws and their amendments have formed "a complex web of legislation that is poorly integrated, hard to administer, and not delivering the intended outcomes" (p. 13). The "Review into the future for local government" (2021) noted that, despite being given the legal obligation to enhance community well-being, local authorities do not have all of the necessary levers to do so. The same review found that they operate in a framework that does not foster collaboration, innovation, or the authentic embodiment of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The reasons legislative and regulatory frameworks for local government in New Zealand do not work as intended can be ascertained by looking into the practices behind their formulation. In this regard, Cheyne (2012, p. 40) opined that councils have not benefitted from "ad hoc and fragmented reviews that lack a strong vision for local government." The Productivity Commission (2020, p. 13) also identified "lack of direction and guidance from

central government” as problematic for local government, which has been evident in resource management. Until recently, the issuance of national direction instruments⁴ to aid in the implementation of the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 has been slow; those that have come through generally arrived without a funding source for councils or adequate national support to implement their requirements (Productivity Commission, 2020). As new directives come, local authorities face the need to update the plans and policies that were created in the absence of this guidance.

Additionally, the interface between central and local government needs improvement in terms of local authorities being recognised as “policy partners” (Productivity Commission, 2013, p. 93). Other studies validate these recommendations. Cheyne (2012), for example, argued that the Central and Local Government Forum, which provides a strategic level of engagement between the two spheres of government offers no constitutional protection for local government which could ensure the continuity of this partnership. The frequency with which this Forum meets was reduced by the Fifth National Government (2008–2017) from twice to once a year. Meanwhile, some local government officials have shared experiences of central government disregarding the evidence they collected in support of a policy or program and making contrary decisions without consultation (ThinkPlace, 2021).

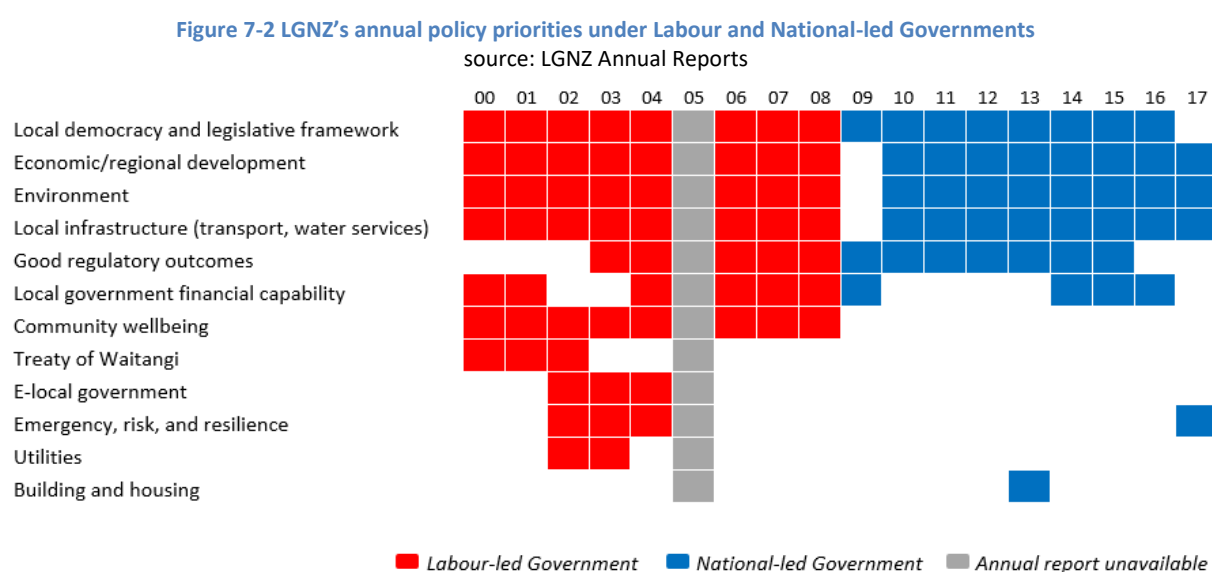
Other challenges include limited impact analysis and quality assurance of national policies for local government (Productivity Commission, 2013). The “Review into the future for local government” (2022) found that central government often imposes costs or obligations on local government without adequate consideration of their impact. Consequently, some local authorities are under significant fiscal pressure, and many experience capacity constraints. Such practices are not aligned with local autonomy and accountability in that imposing a national requirement, without considering the need for support from central government, may result in a different funding decision from that a council would have otherwise taken based on the needs of its community.

⁴ National direction instruments constitute National Policy Statements (NPSs) and National Environmental Standards (NESs) on various topics including freshwater management, urban development, and indigenous biodiversity. The ongoing resource management reform aims to consolidate these into one document called the National Planning Framework (NPF).

7.3 Tools for consolidating local authorities' interests

7.3.1 Annual policy priorities

LGNZ's annual policy priorities are set based on what the National Council based has identified as the long-term challenges facing communities and the implications of those challenges for local government (LGNZ, 2016a). An examination of these priorities reveals that they also show responsiveness to emerging issues. For example, LGNZ prioritised *e-local government* and *emergency, risk, and resilience* in relationship to the millennium (Y2K) bug and the Waikato weather bomb in 2002, respectively. The priorities they set serve as a roadmap for LGNZ's engagement with central government, guiding efforts to shape policy settings that support social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing (LGNZ, 2019a). LGNZ structures its advocacy work around these priorities, with lobbying on specific bills reported under each.



Note: This figure excludes strands that are internal to LGNZ such as organisational governance, member engagement, and capacity-building.

Figure 7-2 above identifies LGNZ's policy priorities as stated in its annual reports between 2000 and 2017, presented under various banner headings such as "Priority Issues" (LGNZ, 2000); "Policy Priorities" (LGNZ, 2001; 2002); "Work Areas" (LGNZ, 2003a; 2004); "Sector Goals" (LGNZ, 2006); and "Strategic Priorities" (LGNZ, 2010a). Given the variations in wording across the reports, policy priorities were clustered based on the researcher's understanding of each. Priority areas that have remained consistent for nearly two decades and across

changes of government include legislative frameworks empowering local authorities, good regulatory outcomes, financial capability, economic/regional development, infrastructure, and environmental policies. This consistency suggests that the fundamental issues local governments care about do not shift based on which parties are in power.

7.3.2 Remits

While LGNZ can propose policy positions to its members, former LGNZ Chief Executive Malcolm Alexander (LGNZ, 2019a, para 3) highlighted the importance of the association's remits process, writing: "Remits are the lifeblood of any membership organisation." Remits are positions or policies on current interests or concerns of national significance that member councils put to LGNZ's Annual General Meeting for a vote. Those that have garnered majority support become LGNZ's official policy and are put up to central government. Any member local authority can propose a remit, but there are rules and procedures to determine which shall be put to vote.

The Remit Screening Committee, composed of the LGNZ President, Vice President, and Chief Executive, reviews each remit according to the criteria set in the association's internal policy. Three of these, as listed below, act as safeguards against proposals serving the individual interest of a local authority, an issue experienced by LGNZ's predecessors:

- Remits must be relevant to local government rather than exclusively relevant to a single zone or sector group or individual council.
- They should be of a major policy nature (constitutional and substantive policy) rather than matters that can be dealt with by administrative action.
- They must have formal support from at least one zone or sector group meeting, or five councils, prior to their being submitted, for the proposer to assess support and achieve clarity about the scope of the proposal.

In addition, the committee considers the alignment between each proposed remit and LGNZ's annual policy priorities.

7.3.2.1 Unanimous, controversial, and failed remits

A successful remit typically receives between 60 and 96 per cent votes from local authorities. The following are examples of remits that obtained close to unanimous support:

LGNZ (2017b)

- establishment of greater power to issue infringement notices under the Litter Act;
- creation of a Climate Change Adaptation Fund;
- revision of the Road User Fees and Chargers to incentivise a sustainable and safe usage of rural roads for heavy commercial vehicles;

LGNZ (2018a)

- development of a plan to eliminate the use of single-use plastics;
- allocation of research funding into the effects of nitrates in drinking water on human health;
- national-led monitoring and evaluation of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act's 1987 implementation; and

LGNZ (2019e)

- local government representation in all levels of national policy development for climate change adaptation.

LGNZ reviewed a record number of remits in 2019, when members voted in favour of 21 out of 24 proposals. Such a volume of remits from members was considered an indication of their confidence in LGNZ (2019d) to drive further action as the peak membership organisation to all local councils.

Remits that have divided local authorities but managed to achieve a narrow majority include proposals for establishing safety rules for e-scooters (LGNZ, 2019e) and developing national legislation for cat management (LGNZ, 2017b). Remits that members have largely opposed include proposals for centralising the selection of independent commissioners for Resource Management Act (RMA) hearings and giving mayors the power to appoint their deputies (LGNZ, 2019e).

7.3.3 Submissions

A review of comment letters from local government lobbyists in the US found that they rarely attempt to block proposed rules and instead focus on advocating for issue-specific adjustments (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Entwistle and Laffin (2002, p. 39) offer insight into this approach, noting that the English LGA viewed “engaging positively” with central government’s agenda as the most effective way to influence policy. Additionally, research abroad suggests that resource constraints often limit LGAs to a reactive rather than proactive stance in policymaking (Callanan, 2012; Entwistle & Laffin, 2003; Isaac-Henry, 1984).

An LGA’s influence depends on its ability to engage constructively with a government’s policy agenda. To remain in a place of influence, some LGAs deem they must not be seen by policymakers as being “unhelpful, getting in the middle of an argument, being obstructive, applying huge pressure, or pushing particular lines of principle” (Laffin & Entwistle, 2000, p. 215). In New Zealand, Bush (1995, p. 174) wrote that local authorities endeavour to “gain the ear” of political forces at the centre, and that “patient submission” is one of the tools often relied upon to do so. Out of the submissions retrieved for this thesis, LGNZ opposed only two legislative proposals in their entirety, the 2003 Marine Reserves Bill and the 2004 Overseas Investment (Queen's Chain Extension) Amendment Bill. Both bills were withdrawn.

For this thesis, a total of 78 submissions made to select committees were retrieved from Parliament.nz between the 48th and 52nd Parliament (2005—2017). Using Hay’s (1991) approach from Section 7.2.1, analysis of these submissions shows that LGNZ interacted with certain select committees more than others (see Table 7-1 below). The subject-area competencies of the committees that LGNZ engaged with more frequently (shown in bold font in the table) indicate an alignment between LGNZ’s advocacy work at the select committee level and its annual policy priorities. For instance, the three select committees that LGNZ had most frequently engaged with during this period relate to the policy areas of the environment, infrastructure, and local government.

Table 7-1 LGNZ submissions to Parliament (48-52)

data source: New Zealand Parliament; Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (2008, 2020)

Select Committee	Subject-area competencies	Submissions (% Share)
Local Government and Environment	conservation, environment, and local government	28 (36%)
Environment*	conservation, environment, climate change	
Transport and Industrial Relations	accident compensation, immigration, industrial relations, labour, occupational health and safety, transport, and transport safety	10 (13%)
Transport and Infrastructure*	transport, transport safety, infrastructure, energy, building and construction	
Governance and Administration*	public governance, parliamentary and legislative services, Prime Minister and Cabinet, State services, statistics, internal affairs, civil defence and emergency management, local government	8 (10%)
Government Administration	civil defence, cultural affairs, fitness, sport and leisure , internal affairs, Pacific Island affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, racing, services to Parliament, State services, statistics, and women's affairs	
Commerce	business development, commerce , communications, consumer affairs, energy, information technology, insurance, superannuation, and tourism	7 (9%)
Justice*	constitutional and electoral matters , human rights, justice, courts, crime and criminal law, police, corrections, Crown legal services	7 (9%)
Justice and Electoral	courts, Crown legal and drafting services, electoral matters , human rights, and justice	
Finance and Expenditure	economic and fiscal policy, taxation, revenue , banking and finance, superannuation, insurance, Government expenditure and financial performance, public audit	6 (8%)
Māori Affairs	Māori affairs, Treaty of Waitangi negotiations	4 (5%)
Health	health	3 (4%)
Primary Production	agriculture, biosecurity , racing, fisheries, productive forestry, lands, and land information	3 (4%)
Auckland Governance Legislation	legislation concerning Auckland's governance	1 (1%)
Social Services	housing , senior citizens, social development, work and income support, and youth development	1 (1%)
Total		78 (100)
<i>* Changes were made in the select committee structure during the 52nd Parliament</i>		

During the preparation of these submissions, decision-making is distributed throughout LGNZ's organisational structure, as discussed in Chapter Six (Section 6.2.2). Depending on the policy issue, LGNZ would engage a sector group, a committee, or a sub-committee to develop a position for local government. Excerpts presented in Table 7-2 below from LGNZ's submissions on multiple legislative bills substantiate this proposition.

Table 7-2 LGNZ's consultation processes

Bill name	LGNZ consultation process
Land Transport Amendment Bill 2016	"Local Government New Zealand has coordinated with the Road Controlling Authorities (RCA) Forum and the Transport Special Interest Group (TSIG), representing regional government transport interests, for this submittal. Additionally, to create a thorough and balanced response, they have sought and considered comments from other stakeholder organisations, including The New Zealand Local Authority Traffic Institute (Trafinz) and The Blind Foundation" (LGNZ, 2016h, p. 3).
Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Bill 2013	"The Bill was discussed extensively at the Metro Sector meeting on Friday, May 25th, and this submission reflects the views of that meeting" (LGNZ 2013, p. 3).
Climate Change Response (Moderated Emissions Trading) Bill 2009	"Local Government New Zealand sought input into the preparation of this submission from National Council representatives of the Climate Change Sub-committee and regional council biosecurity managers." (LGNZ 2009, p. 3).
Overseas Investment (Queen's Chain Extension) Amendment Bill 2004	"Local Government New Zealand prepared a questionnaire for councils to express their views on the proposals contained in the Bill and to provide direction for a submission. The questionnaire was sent to all councils. A total of 32 questionnaires were completed. The results were analysed and used as a basis for preparing this submission" (LGNZ 2004, p. 2).

Scholars have observed that other LGAs follow similar processes to decide on policies, and they have proposed reasons for this. First, the staff of these organisations can be small, but they have within reach the weight of officials from local authorities to provide the expert knowledge, information, and advice (Isaac-Henry, 1980). Likewise, LGNZ's leadership is supported by elected and non-elected local government officials appointed to various committees (DIA, 2006). Second, research found Canadian associations manage and balance local government interests through comparable subgroupings (Chenier, 2009; Shott, 2015). The "Review into the future for local government" (2022) also recognises the specific roles LGNZ's organs have in advocating for and representing different voices within the local government. The third is related to the first two, lending legitimacy to LGA's policy position.

Observe how LGNZ underscores the inputs of its subgroups in preparing its submissions (see Table 7-2). Note, previous chapters argued that legitimacy provides local government associations with better access to decisionmakers than other groups.

Isaac-Henry (1980, p. 246) observed that English LGAs scrutinised all legislation concerning their members in minute detail, guided by the following objectives:

- to examine the effect of the policy and intentions of the Bill upon member authorities and to seek appropriate amendments where this appears desirable;
- to see that the words used properly express what is understood to be the intention of the Bill;
- to see that the administrative machinery proposed for carrying out the objects of the Bill is effective and in so far as it involves action by or in relation to local authorities is adaptable to their internal organisation; and
- to consider what additional clauses can reasonably be sought for inclusion in the Bill to give effect to proposals by the Association for new or amending legislation.

LGNZ adopts a similar approach when developing its submission to select committees, conducting a clause-by-clause analysis of bills to determine their policy implications for local government. As indicated in its submission on the Resource Management Bill, LGNZ (2013c) uses different criteria to do so: “We have considered these [provisions] in the context of their necessity, workability, and the potential to impose costs.” (p. 4).

7.3.4 Insights from LGNZ’s tools for consolidating council interests

This analysis of LGNZ’s annual policy priorities, remits, and parliamentary submissions highlights the recurring organisational practices through which the association consolidates diverse council interests. By engaging expert subgroups, conducting clause-by-clause assessments, and requiring collective support for proposals from multiple councils or sector groups, LGNZ demonstrates the systematic approaches it takes to shaping its advocacy agenda. Evidence of these practices reveals how technical information, collective endorsement, and incremental adjustments are valued above isolated interventions or

attempts to block legislation. These patterns are developed into issue-based features that are subsequently examined for their association with LGNZ's lobbying success.

7.4 Internal and external challenges to consolidating diverse interests

7.4.1 Truncated consultation processes

DPMC (2019) acknowledged the importance of central government giving local government representatives an adequate opportunity to develop their perspectives on policy issues and discuss how they preferred to be engaged. Early communication between the two tiers also allows time for local government to fulfil their requirements for community consultation as well as to meet the need to align with their planning and funding procedures. LGNZ's submission on the 2008 Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Bill demonstrates that timely and active engagement with local government is not always realised. In that submission, LGNZ CEO Eugene Bowen wrote:

I must record our disappointment in you providing only one week for further submissions to what is a substantially redrafted Bill. The timeframe has not allowed for us to consult with our membership, fully analyse the Bill, prepare a formal submission authorised by our National Council, nor to provide you with constructive recommendations (LGNZ, 2010b, p. 1).

In this statement, LGNZ explicitly highlighted how the compressed timeframe undermined its capacity to perform the activities required to represent local authorities effectively in the policymaking process, including consultation, analysis, internal approval, and the development of policy recommendations.

7.4.2 Piecemeal legislation

The Legislation Design and Advisory Committee (LDAC 2018), New Zealand government's expert advisory group on improving the quality of lawmaking, recommends that central government officials consider an Act and its secondary legislation as a complete legislative package. These two, related levels of law should be developed in tandem as much as possible, especially where the secondary legislation contains important operational and technical policy detail. In terms of timeline, officials should have the content of the secondary

legislation finalised once a bill is at the select committee to allow MPs and the public to review the full legislative regime and consider improvements. LGNZ had taken a similar stand, asserting that “it is poor regulatory practice to expect local authorities to make informed submissions on a Bill when the actual requirements that are proposed to be placed on them are largely unknown.” (LGNZ, 2012b, p. 8). In other words, local governments should not have to develop a position on piecemeal legislation.

LGNZ (2011d) expressed difficulty in responding to specific proposals for the 2009 Building Act Review, given the uncertainties in the reform. Many details had been deferred for inclusion in regulations, and this made it nearly impossible for LGNZ to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes on local authorities. LGNZ (2015b) issued a similar position in the 2015 Building (Pools) Amendment Bill. It requested that the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) publish at least an exposure draft of the secondary legislation while the Bill was before the select committee. As the Bill would involve many New Zealand homes, LGNZ contended that the public should have a full understanding of how it affected them and their relationship with their local governments.

7.4.3 Limited involvement in policy development

LGNZ (2011b, 2013a, 2016c, 2020c) has consistently welcomed opportunities to be involved early in the policy development process, viewing such engagement as critical to ensuring legislation is workable for local government. It has praised central government agencies for their inclusive and consultative approach taken in the context of drafting legislation such as the 2011 Freedom Camping Bill, 2016 Food Safety Bill, fire services legislation, and Whenua Māori rating reforms. In turn, LGNZ has also been outspoken when local government has been excluded from policy development. Its submission on the 2020 COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Bill provides a strong example of this:

LGNZ and the local government sector have had very limited involvement in the ‘fast track consenting’ policy and the consequential Bill before you. We have not been afforded an opportunity to review the detail of the Bill as it was developed and as a consequence, we have not been able to develop a submission that is fully informed by the expertise across the sector. We place on record our concern about this. Local

government has a key role in implementing this legislation so why we have not been fully engaged as the Bill has been drafted is perplexing. (LGNZ, 2020c, p. 2)

7.4.4 Many bodies, one voice

Highly aggregated interests have better chances of being adopted into policy. Local government associations, however, have long struggled with the challenges diversity can pose to the development of a representative stance on a given issue (De Soto, 1995). As the official peak body representing all types of local authorities, LGNZ represents a broad church, and it must cater for every one of its members (Reid, 2021). Mulholland (1972) described the differences among members that LGNZ's predecessor had to work through to reach a unified position: "The Municipal Association has to aggregate the interests of the smaller urban with the larger urban, the rural with the urban boroughs; the interests of those desiring reform with the reactionaries" (p. 43). This description remains relevant.

The above means that the challenges to consolidating interests to achieve policy goals are not just external. This was demonstrated when members resolved in a remit that LGNZ must poll them on any critical local government matters before a decision was made (LGNZ, 2022b), including considerations of formal agreements with the Crown, the granting or removal of council functions, and substantial legislative changes. Proponents of the polling, who believed that moving forward without majority support on issues could be divisive, referred to the agreement LGNZ had signed with central government committing support to the water services delivery reform when there was still substantial opposition from councils (LGNZ, 2022a).

Citing dissatisfaction with the association's handling of the water services reform, Timaru District Council (TDC) had withdrawn its membership from LGNZ in 2021. TDC (2022) believed that LGNZ's engagement with central government on the reform had not been transparent to its members and that the position it took was not in line with what TDC considered to be an appropriate position for a local government peak body. Additionally, TDC felt that there had been no prior consultation with members before LGNZ took its stance.

7.5 Collective policy interests of local government

LGNZ applies a set of local government principles to shape its position on national policies (see Table 7-3 below). The association asserts that these principles reflect the policy interests around which local authorities are “unified and strong” (LGNZ, 1999, p. 7).

Table 7-3 Local government principles
source: LGNZ (2011)

Principle	Description
Local autonomy	Communities should be free to make the decisions directly affecting them, and councils should have autonomy to respond to community needs.
Local democracy	Councils should be accountable to communities, and not to Government, for the decisions they make on behalf of communities.
Localised solutions	Avoid one-size-fits-all solutions, which are over-engineered to meet all circumstances and create unnecessary costs for many councils. Local diversity reflects differing local needs and priorities.
Equity	Regulatory requirements should be applied fairly and equitably across communities and regions. All councils face common costs and have their costs increased by Government, and government funding should apply, to some extent, to all councils. Systemic, not targeted funding solutions.
Less compliance cost	Legislation and regulation should be designed to minimise cost and compliance effort for councils, consistent with local autonomy and accountability. More recognition needs to be given by Government to the cumulative impacts of regulation on the role, functions, and funding of local government.
Cost-sharing for national benefit	Where local activities produce benefits at the national level, these benefits should be recognised through contributions of national revenues.

LGNZ’s main advocacy documents reflect these common principles through the desired outcomes set in its annual policy priorities, the council-adopted requests in remits, and the rationale behind its support for, opposition to, or proposals in legislative submissions. Table 7-4 presents an overview of the findings, and the sections that follow explain them in more detail.

Table 7-4 Local authorities' collective policy interests
as seen through LGNZ's annual policy priorities, remits, and submissions

Collective policy interests	Council-adopted proposals (Remits)	Support/oppose/propose (Submissions)
Local autonomy - Control in providing the needs of the community - Enabling over prescriptive statutes - Risk management and emergency response*	- Enabling provisions to enforce councils' legal responsibilities in road safety, waste management, and short-term accommodation	- Supported reinstatement of the four well-beings as a purpose of local government - Supported council's discretion to allow trading during Easter Sunday - Opposed restrictions on the usage of environmental data collected by regional councils
Local democracy - Councils are accountable to their community - The community is acquainted with their council - High participation in local elections - Local democracy and legislative framework*	- Extension of the electoral cycle from three to four years - Revisions in the quorum rules to allow elected or appointed members' virtual participation in public council meetings - Electoral Commission's greater role in local elections and polls	- Opposed authorising the Local Government commission to amend Long-Term Plans without consultation. - Proposed that council plans be a basis in declining applications under the fast-track consenting scheme.
Local solutions and input - Less one-size-fits-all policies - Flexibility in policies to reflect local differences and community preferences - Central and local government collaboration in developing policies, laws, and regulations - Infrastructure, environment, and community well-being*	- Localised alcohol and tree protection policies - Local government representation in all levels of national policy development for climate change adaptation	- Supported council discretion in formulating their respective local alcohol policies - Opposed blanket criteria on seismic capacity assessment for buildings - Proposed legislative guarantee for council input in secondary legislation under the Building Act - Proposed council representation in Taumata Arowai (Water Services Authority)
Clear legal framework - Consistency of a proposed measure with other existing laws and local government processes - National guidance - Accurate definitions - Treaty of Waitangi*	- National guidance on unsealed roads; cat management, road pricing, and wastewater testing	- Proposed qualifying what constitutes "appropriate training" under the Food Bill - Proposed providing frameworks for council reporting - Proposed that adopting LGA procedures for assessing council performance instead of a new regime
Reduced compliance cost - Laws and regulations should not impose complex and costly processes - Central government considers the financial implications to councils of proposed laws and regulations - Good regulatory outcomes*	- Introduction of a liability cap for councils concerning building defect claims - Raising the threshold for the mandatory earthquake strengthening	- Opposed public consultation when modifying pest management plans in line with national direction - Proposed appellants to the Environmental Court be limited to submitters on plans

Collective policy interests	Council-adopted proposals (Remits)	Support/oppose/propose (Submissions)
		- Supported extending the life of plans while allowing for a partial review
Equity - Regulations, costs, and funding should apply fairly and equitably to all councils - Financial capability*		- Opposed shifting gaming machine profits to local authorities, using electoral boundaries as a basis for catchment and investment - Proposed a state lotteries model
Funding - Less dependence on rates, more financing sources - Funding new mandates - Cost-sharing for national benefit - Equitable distribution across the regions - Economic development, infrastructure, and financial capability*	- Climate change adaptation fund - Local share from GST - Access to Income Related Rents - Development of annual regional balance of transfers	- Opposed new responsibilities for councils on gambling harm with corresponding funding - Proposed authorising councils to charge owners for pool inspections instead of using rates
*Annual policy priority where a policy interest is defined or understood as a desired outcome		

7.5.1 Local autonomy

Reflecting LGNZ's belief that local authorities are essential to New Zealand's democracy and community empowerment, local autonomy has been a central theme in the association's lobbying agenda (LGNZ, 2018a). LGNZ argues that central government cannot meet the diverse needs of every community alone, making the case for a more balanced distribution between central and local government of public authority and decision-making. However, LGNZ has observed a trend toward centralisation over the past two decades which it believes has undermined councils' ability to innovate and plan for the long term.

One policy priority where LGNZ has championed local autonomy is in risk management and emergency response. Local government plays a key role in civil defence and emergency management (LGNZ, 2022). LGNZ's early lobbying efforts in this space focused on ensuring rural fire services were efficiently delivered (LGNZ, 2004). In subsequent years, this work expanded under the broader banner of community well-being (LGNZ, 2006; 2007; 2008). More recently, as climate change has heightened risks from natural disasters, LGNZ (2018a) has pushed for policies that strengthen councils' capabilities and capacity to manage these risks.

Member councils have also directed LGNZ to advocate for stronger enforcement tools to support their fulfilment of their responsibilities under existing laws. For example, members endorsed a proposal for LGNZ to seek amendments to the Litter Act 1979 that would allow local authorities to issue infringement notices when an offence is evidenced (LGNZ, 2018b). Similarly, in response to a remit, LGNZ (2020b) pushed for changes to land transport laws so that red-light running incurs demerit points, aligning it with other traffic offences. With the rise of the provision of short-term rentals by private individuals through platforms like Airbnb, LGNZ (2020b) lobbied for legislation requiring providers to register with their local council. This initiative stemmed from a 2019 remit aimed at ensuring that councils could equitably regulate and rate the otherwise invisible industry.

LGNZ's advocacy for local autonomy is also evident in its submissions on key legislation. A notable example was its support for reinstating the four well-beings—social, economic, environmental, and cultural—in the purpose clause (Section 10) of the LGA02. LGNZ viewed this change as a small but necessary step toward restoring councils' ability to define their own priorities and address community needs (LGNZ, 2018). The association had previously criticised the narrower focus of the same provision on infrastructure, services, and regulation, arguing that councils and their communities are best placed to determine what to do and how to do it (LGNZ, 2013d).

LGNZ has supported numerous legislative provisions that empower councils to make decisions aligned with local needs. For example, on the 2013 Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill, LGNZ backed provisions granting territorial authorities the discretion to balance safety risks with heritage preservation through exemptions and consents for building alterations (LGNZ, 2014a). Similarly, LGNZ welcomed the 2015 Shop Trading Hours Amendment Bill for giving councils the authority to decide whether to permit trading on Easter Sundays (LGNZ, 2015d).

LGNZ has also defended local autonomy against perceived overreach by central government. For instance, it strongly opposed certain provisions of the 2002 Marine Reserves Bill, which as proposed granted extensive powers to the Minister of Conservation, such as appointing

and dismissing reserve committee members, revoking the Order in Council that establishes a reserve, and deciding over concessions for commercial and other activities (LGNZ 2003). It condemned these powers as “far-reaching” and “unjustified” (LGNZ, 2003b, p. 5). Another area of contention was the 2014 Environmental Reporting Bill. In its submission on this Bill, LGNZ (2015c) sought to protect councils’ rights over the environmental data they collect, expressing concerns over the limitations imposed on the use and disclosure of information by Statistics New Zealand’s environmental reporting. The association stressed the importance of councils retaining control over data collected for statutory obligations such as reporting and policy development.

7.5.2 Local democracy

Promoting local democracy has been a long-standing priority for LGNZ, driven by ongoing concerns among its members over the lack of public understanding of the role and functions of local authorities (LGNZ, 1999). In the early 2000s, this lobbying agenda expanded to emphasise the need for councils to remain accountable to their communities. LGNZ (2006; 2009) has since focused on advocating for a legislative framework that empowers councils to meet local needs while ensuring elected officials remain answerable to their communities through democratic processes.

LGNZ’s advocacy for local democracy has included efforts to improve key legislation regulating local government, such as the LGA02, the Rating Act 2002, the Local Electoral Act 2001, the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, the Rates Rebate Act 1973, and the Local Authorities (Members’ Interests) Act 1968 (LGNZ, 2001; 2002; 2004). While pushing for greater autonomy for local authorities, LGNZ (2010) has simultaneously worked to enhance voter awareness and electoral participation, recognising that strong local democracy depends on an engaged and informed public.

Councils have also advanced local democracy through remits adopted at LGNZ’s annual meetings. In 2020, three remits in particular directly addressed how local authorities function under the LGA02 and Local Electoral Act 2001. In the first of these remits, Northland Regional Council proposed that LGNZ lobby for an extended local government electoral cycle, from three to four years, arguing that a longer term would enable better policy continuity and

decision-making. In the second, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Waikato District Council called for revisions to quorum rules to allow elected or appointed members to participate virtually in council meetings to ensure accessibility and transparency. In the third, Waipā District Council sought recognition of tohutō (macrons) in council names to elevate the importance of Māori representation in local government. As a final example of LGNZ's efforts to advance local democracy, in 2021, a successful remit was lodged requesting LGNZ to promote that the Electoral Commission's role in local elections and polls held under the Local Electoral Act 2001 be strengthened.

Accountability is a key policy interest considered under the local democracy principle, and LGNZ has actively defended local accountability in its legislative submissions. For example, it opposed a clause in the 2013 LGA02 Amendment Bill (No. 3) that would have granted the Local Government Commission the power to amend Long-Term Plans without consultation when resolving disputes between a local board and its local authority (LGNZ, 2013d). The association viewed this clause as undermining the authority of elected representatives by placing government appointees above them, thereby weakening the accountability of those representatives to their local communities. LGNZ (2013d) made its position clear: "Either the governing body has the right to make decisions and be held accountable through triennial elections or [not]" (p. 10).

For LGNZ, promoting local accountability has also meant defending councils' ability to balance the interests of their entire communities. While LGNZ supported co-management arrangements between Waikato-Tainui and local authorities for the Waikato River, it raised concerns about the practical implementation of such arrangements and the potential conflicts that could arise with local government statutes. In its submission on the 2008 Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Bill, LGNZ underscored the need to uphold democratic accountability, stating:

Local government plays a central role under the RMA [1991] and LGA[02] regimes in ensuring recognition of sound environmental values, effective public participation, well-compiled policy, and good decision-making. It is accountable to citizens and communities and must ensure that this accountability is strengthened and not

diminished by other legislation. We are unclear the extent to which communities understand or are engaged in the changes that may be imposed on them through this [Bill]. (LGNZ, 2009b, p. 9)

Community participation in local government is also fundamental to LGNZ's local democracy principle. As an example, during the COVID-19 outbreak, LGNZ worked to safeguard community participation in local decision-making. When central government introduced a fast-track consenting process to expedite development, LGNZ (2020c) raised concerns that such a process curtailed public input. To mitigate this, it advocated for stronger consideration of local planning instruments as a basis for declining consent applications. To note, the LGA02 requires that local authorities follow a robust consultative process when developing these plans.

7.5.3 Localised solutions and local government input

LGNZ promotes a collaborative approach to policymaking whereby local government expertise can be embedded in legislative and regulatory processes. This is particularly evident in policy priorities such as infrastructure, the environment, and community wellbeing. LGNZ (2001; 2007) has argued for central–local collaboration in setting infrastructure goals and designing governance and regulatory frameworks in areas like transport, housing, broadband, and flood control (LGNZ, 2012a). Similarly, it has pushed for a policy framework that recognises councils' critical role in resource management, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation (LGNZ, 2005). LGNZ (2005; 2007; 2018) also seeks to integrate local government perspectives into national policies related to community wellbeing, including youth development, gambling, housing, heritage and the arts, the ageing population, and social group disparities.

Advocating for local government involvement in regulatory development, LGNZ emphasises the expertise councils have gained from implementing national laws. It has pursued this in at least two ways. First, LGNZ has pushed for a legislative mandate requiring council input on

secondary legislation.⁵ For example, it has argued for local government participation in shaping regulations under the RMA 1991, the Building Act 2004, and alcohol law (LGNZ, 2011c; 2011d; 2013c). Second, it has called for local government representation in statutory bodies. For example, LGNZ (2020e) made a case for the inclusion of members with expertise in council infrastructure and planning on the board of Taumata Arowai, the water services regulator.

Remits presented and adopted by councils through LGNZ reinforce the association's efforts to ensure that legislative frameworks allow local variations. For instance, the Christchurch and Napier City Councils rallied other members to call for changes to the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012, advocating for Local Alcohol Policies (LAPs) that better reflect community preferences (LGNZ, 2018b). Another remit urging local variation from Auckland Council pushed for the repeal of the RMA 1991 provisions that restricted councils from implementing locally tailored tree-protection policies (LGNZ, 2021b). These examples highlight the extent to which local authorities share the view that national laws should provide scope for them to address local concerns effectively.

LGNZ (2015d) has emphasised that "local matters should, as far as practicable, be resolved by local communities through and with their elected representatives" (p. 3). It argues that national one-size-fits-all policies overlook the diversity of communities, reminding the Government that "people do not live nationally, they live locally in heterogeneous communities" (LGNZ, 2020f, p. 4). This principle underpins LGNZ's stance on various legislative bills promoting local solutions.

For example, arguing that councils should be able to tailor provisions based on local licensing needs, LGNZ (2011c) endorsed the 2010 Alcohol Reform Bill's approach of making local alcohol policies discretionary. LGNZ applied the same reasoning in its submission on the 2019 New Zealand Infrastructure Commission/Te Waihangā Bill, which advocated for the appointment of commissioners with experience in local infrastructure planning (LGNZ, 2019f):

⁵ Secondary legislation is law that is made by someone other than Parliament under a power that Parliament has formally delegated in a particular Act. Secondary legislation can have titles like "regulations", "rules" and "Orders in Council."

By the diverse nature of local government...the coordination of infrastructure projects across 78 councils will be a significantly difficult task. ...Inclusion of all stakeholders (public and private) will require strong engagement and close coordination to create worthwhile and useful products that provide clarity in the market and direction for policy and investment. ...Government has traditionally attempted to apply broad and general packages of solutions, where in this case, detailed analysis and coordination is a requirement for the proposed Bill. (p. 2)

LGNZ has also opposed legislative proposals that impose uniform national requirements at the expense of local adaptability. For example, on the 2013 Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill, it challenged a blanket approach to seismic capacity assessments, arguing that earthquake risks and economic impacts vary significantly between councils, making a rigid, nationwide standard inappropriate (LGNZ, 2014b). Similarly, on the 2012 Resource Management Reform Bill, it objected to a universal methodology for evaluating council plans, cautioning that a single standardised practice could lead to unnecessary compliance costs and delays in plan-making (LGNZ, 2013c). On the 2019 Urban Development Bill, LGNZ (2020f) rejected the creation of a powerful central authority capable of bypassing local planning processes, warning that it could create a two-tier system where government-backed projects override community preferences.

7.5.4 Clear legal framework

LGNZ advocates for a clear, consistent, and integrated legal framework that provides certainty for local government and ensures alignment across legislation (LGNZ, 2015a). This agenda is reflected in LGNZ's annual policy priorities, council-adopted remits, and submissions on legislation affecting local authorities. An example of this is LGNZ's push for legislative clarity with respect to the relationship between local government and the Treaty of Waitangi. Given the complexities surrounding the legal authority of councils and the rights of mana whenua, LGNZ (2000) sought to clarify its members' Treaty obligations and their legislative relationship with iwi, particularly under the LGA02 and RMA 1991. The association's early efforts included He Waka Taurua, the first comprehensive study on the Treaty's implications for local government and the direction of public policy on this issue (LGNZ, 1999). LGNZ (2011a) has

also championed the need for Treaty settlements to align with the LGA02 and RMA 1991 to ensure that councils' roles and responsibilities under such settlements are well-defined within the legislative framework.

Where a consistent approach would be beneficial, local authorities have, through LGNZ, urged central government to provide clearer guidance on specific regional and local matters. Remits have repeatedly highlighted the need for national policies, plans, or standards to support local governments across a range of issues. Examples include guidance on unsealed roads (LGNZ, 2017a); cat management, container deposit schemes, road pricing, and wastewater testing (LGNZ, 2018b, 2018a); eliminating single-use plastics and setting rental housing health standards (LGNZ, 2019d); weed control (LGNZ, 2020b); emissions inventory requirements (LGNZ, 2021b); and regulations on the proximity of vaping retailers (LGNZ, 2022b).

LGNZ's advocacy for clear legal frameworks extends to its submissions on legislative proposals like the 2010 Food Bill (LGNZ, 2013b). The submission on this Bill provides examples of policy issues LGNZ may engage in under this lobbying agenda, the first being the need for definitions of key terms to be precise and operationally sound. It pointed out that the Bill's definition of a 'food safety operator' needed refinement, as responsibility should not automatically fall on the business owner, particularly in franchise arrangements. Similarly, it sought clarification on what constituted 'appropriate training' for those working under Food Control Plans.

Reflecting another policy issue, LGNZ pushed for amendments to remove ambiguities in the Bill's provisions. For example, it noted that territorial authorities could not exercise their powers "without limitation" and requested clarification on the scope of national outcomes that the Minister could impose on councils under the proposed legislation. LGNZ also raised concerns about the potential for national outcomes to be issued without proper cost assessments or Cabinet approval, given that these outcomes were not classified as regulations. Additionally, LGNZ recommended the inclusion of a structured framework for councils to report to central government agencies to ensure accountability without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens.

Finally, in this submission on the 2010 Food Bill, LGNZ advocated for legislative consistency across related laws to avoid duplication and inefficiencies. It proposed that council performance reviews under this Bill follow the existing processes outlined in the LGA02 rather than introducing new, potentially conflicting mechanisms. Likewise, it sought clarity on how the Bill's information disclosure provisions aligned with the existing Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. To facilitate smooth implementation, LGNZ suggested that the Bill take effect on July 1, aligning with the fiscal year and long-term planning cycles followed by councils.

7.5.5 Less compliance cost

LGNZ has argued that councils face overly prescriptive laws, complex regulatory processes, and unnecessary administrative burdens handed down by successive governments that drive up compliance costs (LGNZ, 2013c). According to the association, the LGA02 exemplifies this issue, having expanded from 350 to nearly 500 pages in recent years and consequently increased the regulatory burden on councils. LGNZ has advocated for legislative simplification, contending that streamlining council responsibilities would improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary expenditure.

LGNZ has identified 'good regulatory outcomes' as a policy priority under 'reduced compliance cost' in response to what it describes as an increase in central government regulations imposing additional administrative responsibilities on local authorities (LGNZ, 2003a). LGNZ has maintained that regulatory responsibilities should be designed to be effective and workable while minimising costs and compliance risks (LGNZ, 2005; 2007; 2011). The association has emphasised the need for ongoing engagement with lawmakers to ensure they understand the implications of new regulations for local government and to provide opportunities for councils to contribute to regulatory development (LGNZ, 2007).

Councils have also put forward and adopted remits directing LGNZ to advocate for changes that mitigate the financial and legal risks associated with regulatory compliance. For instance, LGNZ (2019d) was tasked with lobbying for a liability cap on councils for building defect claims under joint and several liability settings. Similarly, the association was called upon by its members to push for raising the threshold for mandatory earthquake strengthening under

the Building (Earthquake-Prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016; members argued in their remit that the existing requirements imposed a significant financial strain on councils and property owners (LGNZ, 2018b). Another remit led LGNZ (2021b) to advocate for a warranty scheme to shield councils from civil liability for building consents issued by Consentium, a division of Kāinga Ora. These efforts from its members align with LGNZ's position that local authorities should not be unduly burdened by compliance costs stemming from central government mandates.

LGNZ's participation in policymaking has in fact often focused on what it sees as inefficiencies that drive up compliance costs. During the reform of the Biosecurity Act 1993, for instance, LGNZ (2011e) assessed provisions based on their cost implications for councils and opposed a requirement for public consultation when modifying pest control plans in response to national policy changes, arguing that councils are obligated to follow national directives regardless of community preferences and that consultation can be costly. LGNZ also called for limits on who could appeal pest management plans to the Environment Court, suggesting that only those who had participated in the public consultation process should be eligible, to prevent what it saw as unnecessary delays and legal expenses.

Certain measures that the association believed would reduce compliance costs have been supported by LGNZ as well (2011e). For example, it backed proposals to extend the lifespan of pest management plans while allowing partial (rather than requiring full-scale) plan reviews for minor adjustments, and it welcomed the consolidation of pest management regulations under the Biosecurity Act 1993, which it argued would eliminate the inefficiencies caused by councils having to comply with multiple statutes such as the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 and the Wildlife Act 1953.

7.5.6 Equity

LGNZ believes that equity is achieved through a systematic approach in contrast to reactive funding solutions; its submission to the Gambling (Gambling Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill demonstrates this lobbying agenda. The Bill aimed to shift gaming machine profits from corporate societies to funding committees convened by a territorial authority, requiring at least 80 per cent to be invested in the community from which they were raised, down to the

lowest electoral level. LGNZ (2012) did not support the proposal and raised concerns over possible regulatory leakages and unfair distribution of proceeds. It argued that electoral areas are less effective as catchments since players can visit different venues and thus possibly cross local electoral boundaries. Furthermore, the closure of gambling venues in one area reduces the funding available to that area but does not necessarily diminish gambling harm, as residents of areas where gambling is excluded can play in another location. Thus, the Bill as it was drafted could result in a shifting of support away from communities with higher needs to those that are relatively better off. LGNZ preferred that the operation of gaming machines be assigned to a national statutory authority, following the state lotteries model.

7.5.7 Funding

Funding has been a focus of LGNZ's lobbying efforts, with the association consistently advocating for a more sustainable and equitable funding system for local government. Former LGNZ chief executive Eugene Bowen highlighted this issue, stating: "For almost a decade, our capacity-building advocacy focused on asking the government to put more money on the table, contribute to the compliance costs it was imposing on councils, and make transfers to help resource unfunded mandates" (LGNZ, 2011a, p. 7). LGNZ advocacy around funding broadly addresses two areas: cost sharing and funding mandates.

7.5.7.1 Cost-sharing for national benefit

LGNZ (2018a) has argued that central government contributions are essential for infrastructure growth and maintenance. Many large-scale infrastructure projects such as roads, water systems, and tourism facilities deliver benefits beyond local communities and are therefore deemed appropriate for national investment. LGNZ (2017a) observed that local authorities' reliance on property rates for their funding has constrained investment in key infrastructure, particularly when benefits are diffused and costs cannot be charged to a specific group.

The association has long advocated for a funding model that recognises the shared interests of local and central government in economic development and infrastructure growth. For instance, LGNZ (2020b) called for a fairer resourcing balance and expanded funding tools to support regional economies and more generally sought to "maintain influential participation"

in shaping national economic growth policies and ensuring regional disparities are addressed through targeted funding (LGNZ, 2007, p. 8; LGNZ, 2016a).

Funding has also been a common topic of remits. Local authorities have called for targeted funding schemes, such as a waste and wastewater subsidy scheme (LGNZ, 2016a), a climate change adaptation fund (LGNZ, 2018b), and a local share of goods and services tax (GST) to help fund regional services (LGNZ, 2018b). Additionally, LGNZ (2021b) has advocated for the establishment of a regional balance of transfers which would track how much each region contributes to taxes and compare this to the government funding it receives. These proposals aim to ensure that councils are not disproportionately burdened with costs that benefit the national economy or environment.

LGNZ's legislative submissions reiterate that when local authorities perform functions that contribute to national priorities, they should receive appropriate funding support. For instance, on the 2014 Environmental Reporting Bill, LGNZ (2015c) pointed out that while regional councils provide critical data for national environmental monitoring, they receive no direct funding to support them to do so. That Bill required regular reporting on New Zealand's environmental state but did not address the financial challenges councils face in collecting and managing this data. LGNZ argued that environmental monitoring frameworks were originally designed to inform local and regional decision-making, not national reporting. As such, additional funding was necessary. Similarly, LGNZ (2014a) raised concerns about the cost implications of the 2013 Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill, particularly with respect to the establishment of a national seismic register. Because the register aimed to improve national risk assessment and insurance pricing, LGNZ argued that the financial responsibility for maintaining it should rest with central government, not local authorities.

7.5.7.2 Funding new mandates

Local government has expressed concerns about central government's practice of delegating responsibilities to local authorities without providing the necessary funding. LGNZ (2001) contends that councils, like central government, exercise regulatory and taxation powers that impact New Zealand's economy and society, yet they often lack access to the financial tools

required to carry out these responsibilities effectively. According to LGNZ (2008), councils must be equipped with appropriate funding mechanisms to fulfil both their legal obligations and the expectations of their communities. LGNZ (2010a) has sought to ensure that local government receives a fair deal when new regulatory burdens are imposed.

As a matter of principle, LGNZ (2013a) opposes any new unfunded mandates. For example, it voiced concerns over the way that the 2010 Gambling (Gambling Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill proposed to delegate responsibilities and powers to local authorities without providing these authorities with the resources or the ability to charge for the delivery of these new requirements (LGNZ, 2012b). Similarly, LGNZ raised concerns about aspects of the 2015 Building (Pools) Amendment Bill, which required councils to conduct pool inspections. In its submission, LGNZ (2015b) advocated for territorial authorities to have the ability to charge for these inspections, asserting that ratepayers who did not own pools should not be forced to subsidise those who did. While the desired outcome of such opposition is comparable to the cost-sharing principle discussed above, the reasoning is centred on ensuring that each national directive comes with equivalent support, independent of any direct nationwide benefits.

7.6 Discussion

LGNZ's overarching goal is to enable councils to meet community needs and fulfil their statutory obligations within a complex legislative and regulatory environment. Like similar associations overseas, its lobbying agenda spans a wide range of policy areas, reflecting the diverse functions of local government. Infrastructure, community wellbeing, the environment, and economic development have long featured prominently, together accounting for more than half of local government operating expenditure, with infrastructure alone representing over a third. Across these areas, LGNZ consistently seeks improved funding and financing options, stronger local input into policy and regulatory design, and delivery frameworks that preserve local discretion while minimising compliance costs and implementation risks. These positions align closely with independent reviews identifying that systemic challenges facing New Zealand local government include constrained funding, fragmented national direction, weak central local partnerships, and an unsupportive regulatory framework.

The processes through which LGNZ develops its advocacy documents reflect the organisational challenge of consolidating diverse council interests into a single, credible position. Close engagement with member authorities enables LGNZ to align its policy positions with collective interests and present a unified voice, an important condition for influence (Nugent, 2006). However, consensus-building is constrained by policymaking timelines, uneven consultation, and variation in local circumstances and political preferences; Episodes such as the temporary withdrawal of the Timaru District Council from LGNZ, alongside other councils' consideration of withdrawal and subsequent decisions to remain members (Gourlay, 2022; TDC, 2022; Sail, 2022), highlight the challenges of representing a diverse local government sector while also demonstrating the continuing value councils place on LGNZ as a vehicle for collective advocacy at the national level. While LGNZ's policy positions cannot always be treated as expressions of unanimous council preference, they remain the most cohesive and representative articulation of local government interests available for this thesis.

7.6.1 Towards understanding LGNZ's lobbying success

This chapter shows that LGNZ's advocacy is predominantly operationalised through detailed technical engagement with legislation. Rather than seeking to overturn core policy intent, LGNZ frequently advances incremental or administrative amendments that are supported by clause-by-clause analysis and evidence drawn from local government practice. This pattern suggests that issue characteristics such as the scale of change sought and the form of argument advanced are likely to shape the reception of LGNZ's proposals within the legislative process.

The chapter also highlights how, at the organisational and institutional level, LGNZ navigates the challenge of representing "many bodies, one voice" while maintaining credibility with policymakers. Regular interaction with administering agencies, particularly the Department of Internal Affairs, and sustained engagement with select committees emerge as central features of its lobbying repertoire. These observations point to the importance to LGNZ of collective support, bureaucratic relationships, and procedural venues when the association structures its opportunities for influence.

Most importantly, this chapter reveals the substance of LGNZ's lobbying agenda. In doing so, it clarifies the 'what' of LGNZ's advocacy, identifying the core principles that consistently underpin its engagement with central government, including local autonomy, workability, fiscal sustainability, and proportional regulation. These principles provide a unifying framework through which diverse council interests are aggregated and articulated as a coherent national position.

The crucial question is how receptive central government is to LGNZ's lobbying on behalf of the collective interests of local government. While guidelines exist outlining when and how central government should engage local government, particularly in relation to issues such as local autonomy, funding for new mandates, and reducing compliance costs (see DPMC, 2019), central government compliance with these guidelines may vary. While early engagement may improve opportunities for influence, it does not guarantee favourable outcomes. The fact that engagement does not guarantee favourable outcomes underscores the need to assess how different forms and timing of engagement shape lobbying success, and whether certain aspects of the local government agenda are more likely than others to be reflected in final legislative outcomes.

7.7 Moving forward

At this point, this thesis has outlined the issue areas, lobbying strategies, and institutional pathways through which LGNZ seeks to shape policy outcomes. By identifying recurring patterns in its advocacy, Chapters Six and Seven have highlighted factors that may influence how central government responds to LGNZ lobbying to pursue collective local government interests. The next chapter examines these factors systematically, testing how issue characteristics, LGNZ's organisational capacity, and the institutional context are statistically associated with its lobbying success.

From submissions to enactment: A quantitative analysis of LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and success factors

8.1 Introduction

Political scientists have long examined power relations in policy processes, seeking to identify who shapes policy agendas, formulation, and implementation (Weaver-Hightower, 2014). Demonstrating the effect of specific actors on policy outcomes, however, remains methodologically difficult. Research on local government lobbying is no exception, with limited quantitative evidence on local government success (Jensen, 2019). Quantitative research on interest group activity and success in domestic legislatures is also rare (Binderkrantz, 2014).

Interest groups seek to move legislation closer to their policy preferences (Eising & Spohr, 2017). This chapter examines the extent to which LGNZ achieves its policy preferences, as expressed in its parliamentary submissions. Where LGNZ's position is reflected in the final legislative outcome, a lobbying effort is treated as successful. Lobbying success is used as a proxy for LGNZ's policy influence, which aligns with the discussion in earlier chapters. Chapter Two (Section 2.3) noted that influence is commonly assessed through actor perceptions or policy outcomes, with the latter preferred here given it is less prone to bias and better suited for statistical analysis. Chapter Four (Section 4.4) identified New Zealand scholarship that supports the use of policy outcomes as a measure of lobbying success, while Chapter Six (Section 6.3) showed that LGNZ generally understands success in similar terms, focusing on securing favourable legislative outcomes for local authorities.

8.1.1 Chapter organisation

This chapter examines the extent of LGNZ's lobbying success and identifies factors statistically associated with it. To do so, Section 8.2 sets out the hypotheses tested statistically. These are grouped into institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors derived from earlier

chapters. Section 8.3 presents the statistical findings, beginning with descriptive statistics and followed by chi-square tests assessing associations between these factors and LGNZ's lobbying outcomes across 453 policy issues. Section 8.4 summarises the key findings and limitations of the quantitative phase and explains how these inform the qualitative case study presented in the next chapter.

8.2 Unpacking the factors potentially linked to LGNZ's lobbying success

Chapter Two (Section 2.6) identified a range of factors associated with lobbying success, grouped into institutional factors linked to the political system in which interest groups operate, organisational factors related to resources and tactics, and issue-based factors concerning the characteristics of policy issues. Chapters Four, Six, and Seven showed that several of these factors are relevant to New Zealand's policymaking process and applicable to LGNZ. Drawing upon these insights, 18 hypotheses were formulated. This considerable number of hypotheses highlights not only the exploratory nature of this thesis but also the scarcity of similar, quantitative research within the New Zealand context.

8.2.1 Institutional factors

Chapter Two (Section 2.6.1) referred to institutional factors as features of the political system that determine policymakers' responsiveness to interest groups. Among these were the rules of policymaking, decision-making procedures, and consultation platforms which can empower or disenfranchise interest groups. Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1) showed that institutional arrangements in New Zealand also determine interest group access and behaviour. The discussion in this chapter focused on how the introduction of the MMP voting system has improved the political environment for lobbying by elevating the involvement of a greater number of political parties, whose representatives not only have influence in the House but also contribute to government formation and the policymaking process. Table 8-1 below provides an overview of the hypotheses developed regarding the relationship between LGNZ's lobbying success and specific institutional factors, with the following subsections providing a detailed discussion of each hypothesis.

Table 8-1 Institutional factors potentially linked to LGNZ's lobbying success

H	Hypothesis	Key points
1	LGNZ's success is associated with centre-left governments.	Prevailing political ideology affects local government in New Zealand. LGNZ may experience increased success when centre-left coalitions are in power, as they have historically reversed or halted policies seen to negatively affect local government.
2	LGNZ's success is associated with structurally weaker governments.	Minority governments and the MMP system provided better access and opportunities for lobbying due to the emergence of coalition or support parties and the need for inter-party agreements.
3	LGNZ's success is associated with favourable select committee recommendations.	Select committees often amend bills in response to submissions from interest groups and other stakeholders; the submission process provides LGNZ an opportunity to shape legislation through engagement.
4	LGNZ's success is associated with agency advice agreeing with its position.	Legislators depend on information from ministries and agencies that oversee legislation and advise the government. Central government officials analyse public submissions, including those from LGNZ, and report their agreement or disagreement to the select committee.
5	LGNZ's success is associated with endorsement from a coalition or support party.	LGNZ values cross-party relationships to influence local government policy. Support or coalition parties, in particular, can either provide opportunities or pose obstacles, depending on their alignment with LGNZ's policy objectives.

H1: LGNZ's success is associated with centre-left governments.

In New Zealand, political ideology dictates how local communities are managed and governed (Drage, 2011; Molineaux & Asquith, 2022). Corroborating this, Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.1) showed that the policy environment for local authorities can shift with changes of government. Scholars have argued that past transitions to centre-left governments, particularly the to the Labour–Alliance (1999) and Labour–New Zealand First coalitions (2017), reversed or halted unfavourable policy directions for local New Zealand authorities.

H2: LGNZ's success is associated with structurally weaker governments.

Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.1) highlighted suggestions from local government experts of centralised decision-making and the marginalisation of local councils from the decision-making process. The MMP system has also been cited as a factor in the dilution of executive power in New Zealand. Under a multi-party system, it is not as easy for governments to progress with their legislative agenda. The political realities of MMP require that

compromises be made as bills are developed (LAC, 2001). Local government policies, in particular, depend on inter-party agreements (Bush, 2006). Research into interest group influence attributes the capacity of the government to resist lobbying pressure to its structural strength. Minority governments offer interest groups better access to the parliamentary arena (Chaqués-Bonafont & Muñoz-Márquez, 2016). Based on the findings of Pickup and Hobolt (2015), this behaviour from minority governments is particularly evident in Westminster parliamentary systems.

H3: LGNZ's success is associated with favourable select committee recommendations.

Despite findings suggesting that select committees have a weak impact on legislation in countries such as Australia (Monk, 2012), the UK (Eising & Spohr, 2017), and the US (Burstein & Hirsh, 2007), Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1.4) highlighted that the influence of select committees in the New Zealand case is positively unique among Westminster parliaments. New Zealand select committees have become even more relevant lobbying channel under the MMP system, where they often do not have a government majority. Pieces of legislation are routinely referred to select committees and rarely come out of this process unchanged. The select committee process even offers an opportunity to re-litigate fundamental aspects of the policy and thus “bills may be altered radically” (LAC, 2001, p. 366). In Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.4), LGNZ expressed confidence in the select committee process. With the opportunity to convince decision-makers other than the minister and their officials, LGNZ finds it important to engage the select committee even when it has had early involvement in the policymaking process.

H4: LGNZ's success is associated with agency advice agreeing with its position.

Legislators rely on the information provided by central government officials, as exemplified by the role of administering agencies. They are ministries or departments that are responsible for the operation of legislation and for making recommendations to the government. When a bill is referred to the select committee, it advertises for public submissions and counts on officials for expert opinion (Ganley, 2000). Officials have the usual role of analysing submissions and reporting to the select committee on whether they agree or disagree with the positions raised by stakeholders, including LGNZ. An LGNZ policy position that receives

support from an administering agency is more likely to be favourably considered by the select committee.

H5: LGNZ's success is associated with endorsement from a coalition or support party.

LGNZ recognises the importance of building relationships across the political spectrum to affect party policies on matters relating to local government. However, as noted in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.1.2), consultation and negotiation tend to occur more frequently within a coalition government than outside of it. Considering this inter-party dynamics, links with support and coalition parties that hold the power at the margins could provide LGNZ with pathways through the indifference or opposition of major political parties towards its lobbying objectives. Conversely, significant policy differences with these small parties could prove to be a political obstacle for LGNZ.

8.2.2 Organisational factors

Chapter Two described organisational factors as a lobby group's type, its resources, and the tactics it employs to have an impact on policy. While important, group type is beyond the scope of this analysis, as it solely focuses on LGNZ. In terms of resources, local government associations have been observed to capitalise on informational and political resources, namely their technical expertise, insider status, and legitimacy as representatives of local government. With respect to tactics—classified as insider or outsider lobbying—Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2.2) demonstrated that, in the New Zealand political system, insider lobbying involving direct engagement with policymakers and the policymaking process is both preferred and more effective. Chapter Six (Section 6.5) confirmed through documentary evidence that LGNZ favours such tactics. Table 8-2 summarises the hypotheses developed on the relationship between LGNZ's lobbying success and specific organisational factors, with the following subsections detailing each hypothesis.

Table 8-2 Organisational factors potentially linked to LGNZ's lobbying success

H	Hypothesis	Key points
6	LGNZ's lobbying success differs across administering agencies.	Collaborative relationships with supportive agencies like DIA enhance success, while challenges arise with agencies that view local authorities as agents of central government.
7	LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of argument it presents.	Clear arguments highlighting the impact on councils or communities enhance LGNZ's policy position.

H	Hypothesis	Key points
8	LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of evidence it uses.	Supporting evidence, research, and expertise lend credibility to LGNZ's arguments.
9	Testifying before the select committee is associated with LGNZ's success.	Oral submissions allow LGNZ to directly engage with the select committee and convey their policy stances to decision-makers.
10	LGNZ's success is associated with stronger support from local authorities.	LGNZ's political strength comes from its numbers and representativeness: support from a majority of member councils bolsters its policy position.
11	LGNZ's lobbying success varies across its National Presidents.	Each president brings distinct abilities, approaches, and relationships that can influence LGNZ's advocacy and negotiation approaches on local government matters.

H6: LGNZ's success differs across administering agencies.

Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.3) showed the extent to which LGNZ works with administering agencies across the policymaking process, to draft and vet legislative proposals. Whether LGNZ's engagement with officials leads to lobbying success may depend on the nature of its relationship with the relevant ministry or department. Some findings from Section 6.5.1.3 suggest that these relationships tend to vary. Collaborative relationships have been observed to exist between LGNZ and functional departments that have shown support to local authorities and demonstrated occasional willingness to challenge government policies. Among these, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is of particular interest, given its stewardship role for local government. It is anticipated that LGNZ may face challenges when dealing with national agencies that perceive local authorities as mere agents of central government.

H7 and H8: LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the type of argument (7) and type of evidence (8) it uses.

The value of ideas and information to the New Zealand policymaking process was demonstrated in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2.2). Serving as information providers, interest groups adopt strategies including framing arguments and presenting evidence to increase their impact on policy. These strategies were observed in LGNZ's lobbying activities. When taking a position on legislation as a national advocate for local government, LGNZ develops and offers quality and evidence-based research drawn from the knowledge and expertise of local authorities. It also uses local government principles to analyse the impact of new legislation.

H9: Testifying before the select committee is associated with LGNZ's success.

The presentation of oral submissions, as opposed to written submissions, involve direct engagement between LGNZ and the select committee. Testifying provides LGNZ with a platform to effectively convey their stances to decision-makers. Previous research has discovered a significant connection between the frequency with which oral testimony is given and the perceived level of influence and impact that a group wields within a policy network (Hays, 1990). Confirming or refuting this hypothesis involves testing the relationship between testifying and actual measures of lobbying success.

H10: LGNZ's success is associated with stronger support from local authorities.

LGNZ gets its political strength from how many members it has and how well it represents them. This can be seen in what LGNZ says, what it does, and how it is set up as an organisation. LGNZ employs 'strength in numbers' as a specific lobbying tactic, actively seeking councils' input when preparing submissions, distributing its policy position among its members, and encouraging them to submit their supporting statements. According to the Legislation Advisory Committee (LAC, 2001) strong support for or opposition to specific matters within a bill can have an impact on policy outcomes. When member councils communicate robust support for certain aspects of or express vehement opposition to certain provisions, this provides the select committee with grounds for their recommendation on a bill.

H11: LGNZ's lobbying success differs across its National Presidents.

The association's history underscores the key roles LGNZ National Presidents have played in effective central–local government relations (see Gilling & Henderson, 2000). Present-day LGNZ has also attributed its achievements to effective leadership from the National Council, as covered in Chapter Six (Section 6.4.3). The abilities of each National President to build and maintain relationships with key decision-makers at the national level and to rally support for local government issues is likely to impact lobbying outcomes. The approaches each takes to advocacy and negotiation, addressing ideological bias, or working with political parties can also have a positive or negative effect on the association's results.

8.2.3 Issue-based factors

As discussed in Chapter Two (Section 2.6.3), the characteristics of an issue being lobbied can also determine the lobbying success. An interest group may find it more challenging to win over policy issues that are more salient and contentious. On the other hand, an interest group might be more likely to find success on issues that are highly complex, technical, and require specialised expertise from a particular group. Additionally, Chapter Seven (Section 7.5) covered how the alignment or divergence of legislative proposals with/from certain local government principles ultimately shapes the stance taken by LGNZ. Table 8-3 summarises the hypotheses on the relationship between LGNZ's lobbying success and specific issue-based factors, with the following subsections providing further details.

Table 8-3 Issue-based factors potentially linked to LGNZ's lobbying success

H	Hypothesis	Key points
12	LGZNZ's success varies with its policy position.	Opposing the government's policy intent is more likely to result in failure than supporting it and proposing complementary changes.
13	LGZNZ's success varies with the types of change it seeks.	Lobbying for smaller or technical changes is more likely to succeed than lobbying for more substantive changes.
14	LGZNZ's success varies across principles underlying its policy position.	The Government's response to LGNZ's lobbying is likely to differ depending on whether it advocates for local autonomy and funding or focuses simply on clear legal frameworks.
15	LGZNZ's success varies across policy areas.	Different policy areas exhibit varying characteristics that influence interest groups' chances of success.
16	LGZNZ is less likely to succeed when there is strong opposition to its policy position.	Interest groups struggle with contentious policies, with local government associations facing added challenges due to their broad, geographically driven advocacy across competing priorities.
17	LGZNZ is less likely to succeed on broad-based policy issues.	Broad-based issues tend to be contentious and prompt decision-makers to avoid appearing influenced by any single group.
18	LGZNZ is more likely to succeed on complex or technical legislation.	Complicated policy issues provide more opportunities for LGNZ to influence decision-makers by offering specialised expertise.

H12 and H13: LGNZ's success varies with its policy position (12) and the types of change (13) it seeks.

As evidenced in Chapter Seven (Section 7.5), LGNZ has adopted different stances on central government policies, supporting, opposing, or proposing amendments to legislative measures in the interests of local government. Of the researchers that have considered the likelihood

of the policy preferences of interest groups being accepted, some have hypothesised that groups including local government associations should be more successful in keeping the status quo rather than changing it (Cammisa, 1993; de Widt & Laffin, 2018; Mahoney, 2007). Less substantive changes have also been deemed easier for the government to accommodate (Monk, 2012). Other researchers have found empirical evidence suggesting that groups that adopt positive positions toward government policies tend to be more successful. Cross et al. (2021), for instance, found that groups providing conditional support to a bill are associated with a greater number of amendments to it, when compared with the outcomes of those expressing outright objections. Binderkrantz and Christiansen (2013) arrived at largely the same findings.

H14: LGNZ's success varies across principles underlying its policy position.

Chapter Seven (Section 7.5) identified that LGNZ's advocacy often centres on key local government principles such as local democracy and autonomy, regional development, clear legal frameworks, reduced compliance costs, and involvement in policy development. Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.1) highlighted that the central government's reservations regarding principles such as local autonomy, funding, and partnership result in policy proposals rooted in local autonomy being less likely to be adopted. By contrast, advocating for a clear legal framework can be more promising for LGNZ's lobbying success, as it seeks clarity without opposing the government's policy intent. These observations suggest that a government's response to LGNZ's lobbying may be influenced by the principles underlying the association's policy position.

H15: LGNZ's success varies across policy areas.

Different policy areas encompass issues with varying characteristics, such as contentiousness, salience, or technicality. As discussed in Chapter Two (Section 2.6.3), these characteristics are known to affect an interest group's chances of success. For example, Evans (1996) noted that conflict is more likely in policy areas with clear winners and losers, such as regulatory and redistributive policies, suggesting higher levels of contentiousness in such areas. Similarly, Eising and Spohr (2017) show that different policy areas vary in how open and contested they are, with redistributive areas (e.g., social welfare) tending to involve more structured and

consolidated interest representation, and regulatory areas (e.g., environmental policy) tending to be more open and competitive.

H16: LGNZ is less likely to succeed when there is strong opposition to its policy position.

As noted in Chapter Two (Section 2.6.3), interest groups face lower chances of success on highly contentious policy issues with conflicting stakeholder perspectives. Local government associations are particularly susceptible to this challenge, as they represent geographic rather than functional interests, and this requires them to advocate across diverse policy areas and navigate competing priorities.

H17: LGNZ is less likely to succeed on broad-based policy issues.

Policy issues that affect multiple sectors and groups also tend to be contentious. In such cases, decision-makers will also aim to avoid any appearance of being swayed solely by one group. On the other hand, niche issues attract less opposition and public attention, creating a more favourable environment for interest groups, especially those with a specific area of advocacy, to lobby in.

H18: LGNZ is more likely to succeed on complex or technical legislation.

As discussed in Chapter Four (Section 4.5.2.2), New Zealand interest groups, including LGNZ, often serve as sources of information to policymakers. This capacity to advise becomes particularly significant in the context of complicated policy issues where decision-makers require a substantial amount of input from varied sources. In this context, an interest group can shape the discourse of the decision-making process and ultimately affect its outcome.

8.3 Statistical findings

This section presents the statistical results of the hypothesis testing, which constitutes the initial and primary phase of the sequential explanatory research design adopted in this thesis. As explained in Chapter Five (Section 5.3.3.1), the policy issue raised is used as the unit of analysis for assessing lobbying outcomes. The dataset comprises 453 policy issues drawn from LGNZ's submissions on 37 randomly selected Bills between the 47th and 52nd Parliaments, covering the period from 2002 to 2020.

The explained variable is LGNZ's lobbying success, defined as the extent to which its policy positions, as set out in its submissions, are reflected in the final Act. As argued in Chapter Two (Sections 2.3 to 2.4), lobbying success provides a practical, though imperfect, indication of LGNZ's policy influence. Outcomes are classified as not successful, partly successful, or fully successful. When evaluating what LGNZ lobbied for versus what it achieved, there must be room for some degree of success.

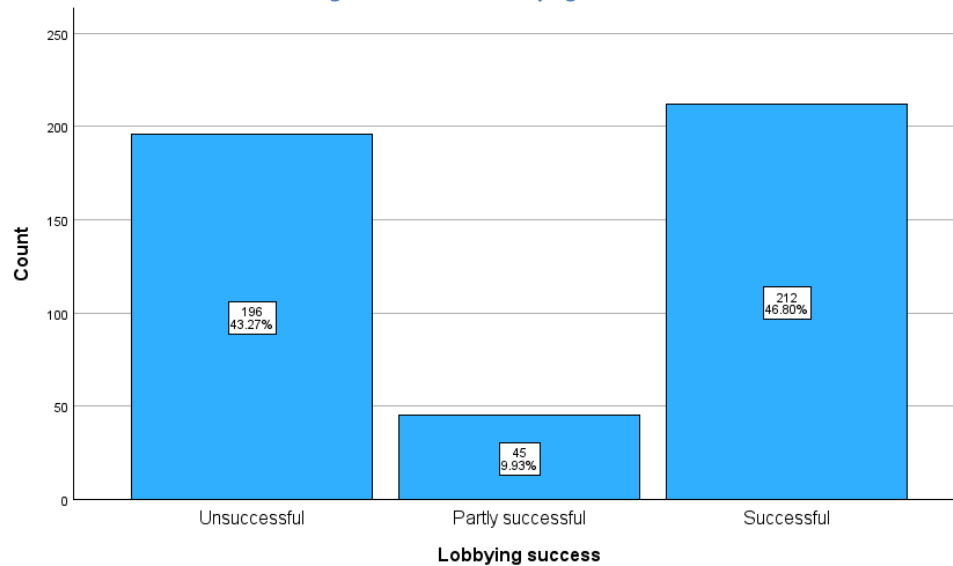
Constructing the explanatory variables required a process of quantitising, in which qualitative information from submissions and parliamentary documents was systematically categorised and converted into numerical data. A more detailed discussion of this process was covered in Chapter Five (Section 5.3.3), and the operational definitions and categories used for the institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors are set out in Appendix A. The resulting numerical values were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests of independence to evaluate LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and to identify factors statistically associated with the association's success.

8.3.1 Descriptive statistics

As described in Chapter Five (Sections 5.3.2 to 5.3.3), the quantitative analysis examined a dataset of 453 policy issues raised by LGNZ in its submissions on 37 randomly selected pieces of legislation. Policy issues raised by LGNZ were coded under different categories. First and foremost, LGNZ's lobbying outcome for each policy issue was coded as fully successful, partly successful, or not successful. Section 8.3.1.1 examines LGNZ's lobbying outcomes, addressing the first research objective of this thesis. Each policy issue was also categorised based on hypothesised factors of LGNZ's lobbying success covered in Section 8.2, such as whether LGNZ supported or opposed a legislative provision associated with a policy issue, which local government principle LGNZ invoked in relation to its position on a policy issue, and whether a specific government agency acknowledged LGNZ's policy position. These variables in particular provide insights into central–local government relations in New Zealand and are discussed in Section 8.3.1.2. Lastly, Section 8.3.1.3 discusses a methodological implication of a pattern in LGNZ's lobbying success noted in Section 8.3.1.1.

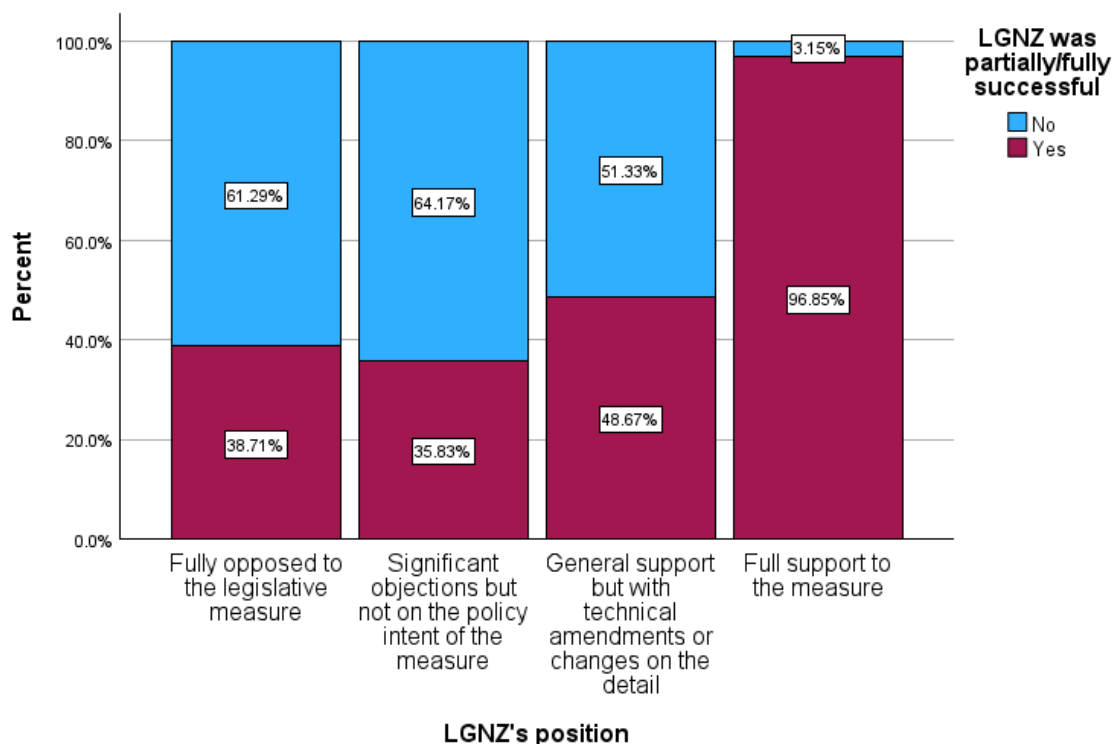
8.3.1.1 The extent of LGNZ's lobbying success (Research objective 1)

Figure 8-1 LGNZ's lobbying success



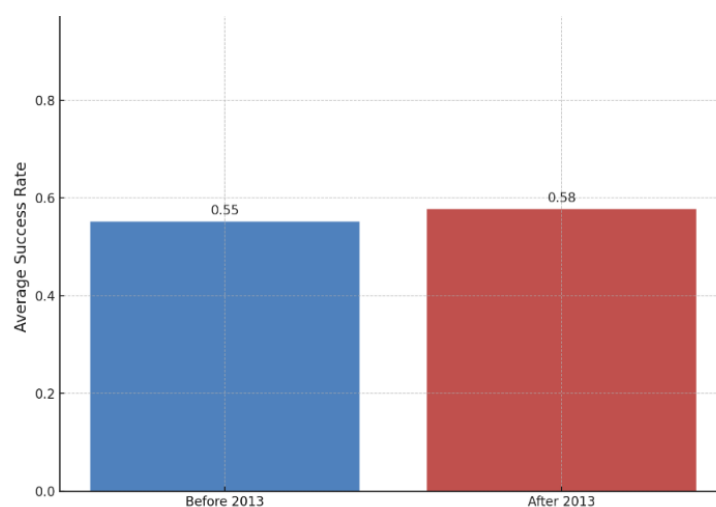
As depicted in Figure 8-1 above, out of 453 policy preferences expressed by LGNZ, 212 (46.8%) were fully reflected in final legislation, 45 (9.93%) were partially reflected, and 196 (43.27%) were not reflected at all. This indicates that LGNZ achieved at least partial success for more than half of the policy issues it staked a position on (56.7%).

Figure 8-2 LGNZ's lobbying success vis-à-vis policy positions



Comparing LGNZ's lobbying success to its policy positions provides illuminating results. As illustrated in Figure 8-2 above, almost four in ten policy issues wherein LGNZ had substantial objections or fully opposed a provision resulted in at least partial lobbying success (35.8% to 38.7% success rate). Proposals for technical changes had better lobbying outcomes, obtaining at least partial success nearly half of the time (48.6%). On the other hand, provisions that LGNZ fully supported were almost always retained in the final legislation (96.8%). These outcomes are still considered successes for LGNZ, both in practical terms and according to the definition of lobbying success adopted in this thesis. However, where LGNZ fully supported a provision, the alignment between the policy positions of the government and the association makes it difficult to attribute the outcome solely to LGNZ's lobbying efforts. Section 8.3.1.3 discusses the methodological solutions used to address this issue, in order to reliably identify factors associated with LGNZ's success.

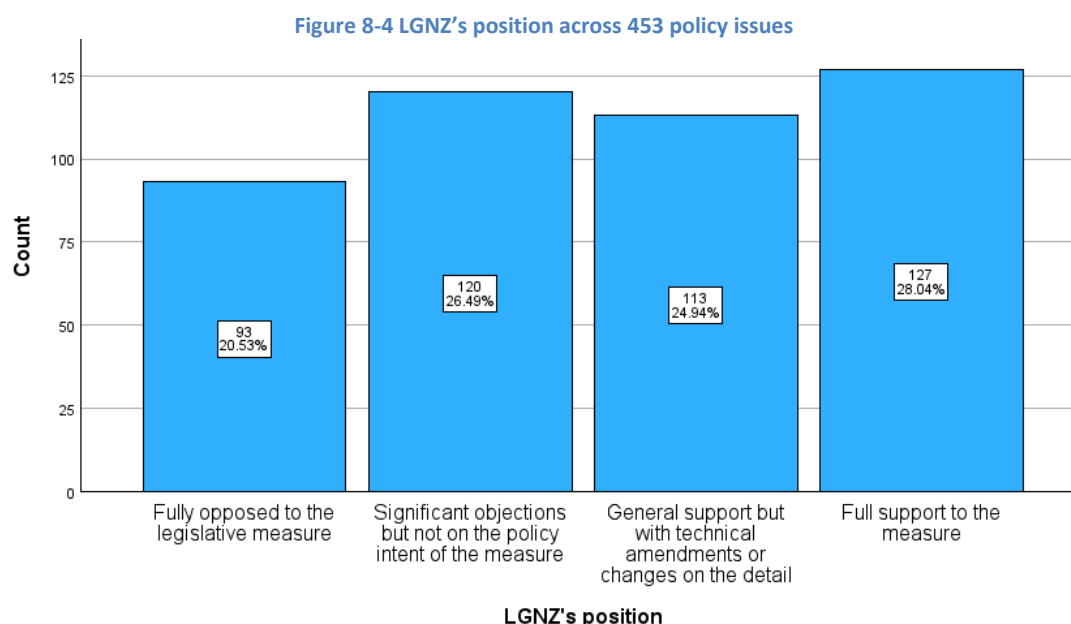
Figure 8-3 LGNZ overall success rate before and after 2013



Recall from Chapter Six (Section 6.2.2.4) that LGNZ underwent reorganisation in 2013 and reallocated staff to focus on proactive lobbying strategies. Figure 8-3 above presents a comparison of LGNZ's success rate based on the total policy issues raised before and after 2013. The results suggest a modest increase in the success rate, rising from approximately 0.55 prior to 2013 to 0.58 thereafter. It is important to emphasise that this finding provides only an indication of change and does not offer insight into shifts in the political environment and external influences that may also have contributed to the observed differences between the two periods. However, the slight rise in success indicates that the changes in 2013 had a positive impact.

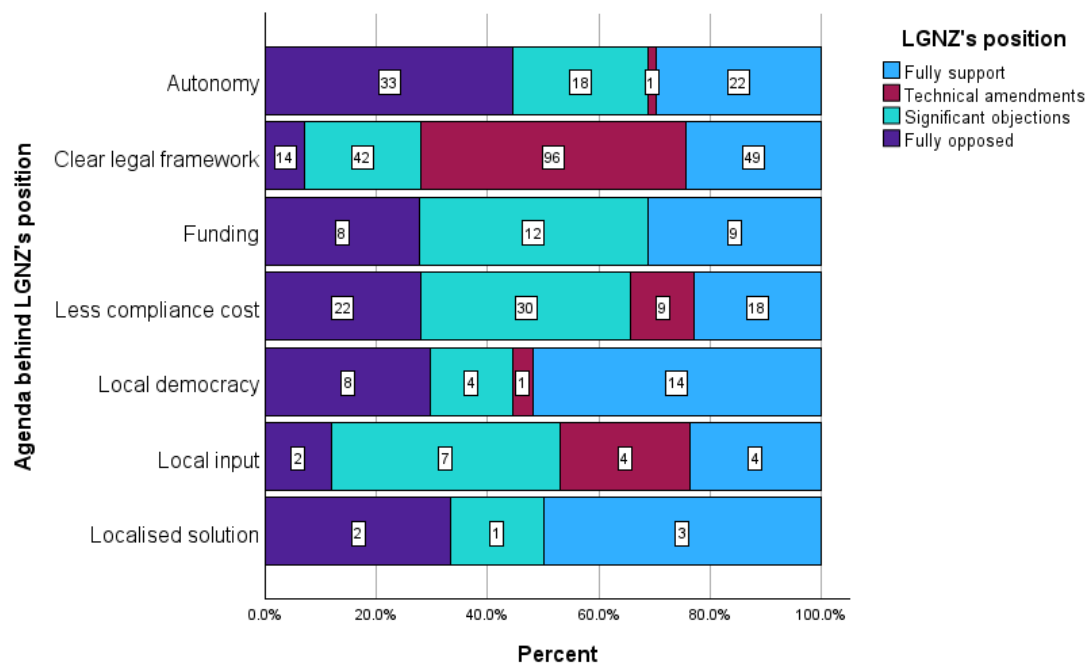
8.3.1.2 Some insights on central-local government relations

Each policy issue was classified according to LGNZ's position on the legislative provision, ranging from full support to full opposition: fully supporting a provision, requesting technical amendments while generally supporting it, raising substantial objections without opposing the policy intent, and fully opposing a provision. Figure 8-4 below illustrates how this played out across these four response types and shows that LGNZ directly opposed only one out of every five government policies and expressed general or full support approximately half of the time. These findings bolster Graham Bush's view noted in Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.1), which rejected the notion of constant conflict between central and local government as a misconception.



Categorising each policy issue based on the lobbying agenda behind LGNZ's position from Chapter Seven (Section 7.5) yielded further insights into central–local government relations (see Figure 8-5 below). Specifically, this figure shows where policy agreements and disagreements have frequently manifested between the two spheres of government. Where LGNZ had significant objections or full opposition, it most frequently raised concerns relating to local autonomy, followed by compliance costs and funding. On the other hand, there appears to be more consensus in establishing clear legal frameworks and ensuring councils are accountable to their communities.

Figure 8-5 LGNZ's lobbying agenda vis-à-vis policy positions



Parliamentary documents, including departmental reports and Hansards, were coded 'yes' and 'no' according to whether LGNZ's positions were reflected in the content of each document. In many instances, administering agencies explicitly cited LGNZ in their reports as influencing their stance on specific policy issues. Table 8-4 below highlights these references across various agencies, with texts from DIA, MBIE, and MPI including the most frequent citations. While not a perfect measure, the table shows that most agencies consider LGNZ's policy positions, underscoring its standing within public sector.

Table 8-4 Direct references to LGNZ across agencies

Ministry/Agency	Directly cited LGNZ?				
	Yes	No	Total	% Yes	% No
Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)	59	67	126	46.8	53.2
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)	1	1	2	50.0	50.0
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	6	1	7	85.7	14.3
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	16	1	17	94.1	5.9
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)	53	15	68	77.9	22.1
Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH)	5	0	5	100.0	0.0
Ministry for the Environment (MfE)	7	35	42	16.7	83.3
Ministry of Health (MoH)	6	0	6	100.0	0.0
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	3	56	59	5.1	94.9
Ministry of Transport (MoT)	26	18	44	59.1	40.9
Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)	35	15	50	70.0	30.0
Public Service Commission (PSC)	0	5	5	0.0	100.0
Te Arawhiti	4	7	11	36.4	63.6
Treasury	5	5	10	50.0	50.0

8.3.1.3 Separating favourable legislative changes from policy alignment

While LGNZ achieved considerable success in securing favourable legislative changes, success was most consistently observed in cases where it fully supported a provision. As noted in Section 8.3.1.1, such an alignment between the policy positions of the government's and LGNZ creates an attribution issue. To ensure that this pattern in LGNZ's lobbying success does not skew the analysis of associated factors, the quantitative analysis distinguishes between instances in which there was clear tension between the positions of the government and LGNZ—specifically where LGNZ sought changes—and those in which alignment already existed.

Two techniques are employed. First, legislation is compared using an 'overall change success' measure, which captures the extent to which provisions shifted in LGNZ's favour and classifies each case as 'unsuccessful', 'partly successful', or 'mostly successful'. The second technique uses the elaboration model (Babbie, 2020), applying two rounds of chi-square tests to examine the relationship between lobbying success and specific factors and then confirming whether any statistically significant link applies to both cases where LGNZ sought changes and where it fully supported a provision. Further details on measurement and interpretation are provided in Appendix A.

8.3.2 Chi-square test results (Research objective 2)

Out of the 18 institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors examined, 9 demonstrated either full or partial association with LGNZ's lobbying success. More often, a partial association is observed in cases where LGNZ sought changes to a provision, rather than in provisions it fully supported, applying Babbie's elaboration approach (see Section 8.3.1.3). On the other hand, the statistical findings did not provide conclusive evidence that LGNZ's lobbying success depends on the other eight factors. To provide a clear discussion of LGNZ's lobbying success, the following subsections focus on the key findings from the chi-square test, their interpretation, and their relevance. For a deeper dive into the statistical analysis, Appendix A provides the cross-tabulations and more detailed interpretation of the statistical results.

8.3.2.1 Institutional factors

Table 8-5 Summary of Chi-square test results for institutional factors

H	Hypothesis	Interpretation of statistical results	Hypothesis supported?
1	LGNZ's success is associated with centre-left governments.	The results show that LGNZ secured more favourable changes under centre-right governments than under centre-left governments, and this relationship was statistically significant. This finding runs contrary to the hypothesis. However, the results still support the broader proposition that LGNZ's success is influenced by which party is in government, even though the direction of the relationship is the opposite of what was hypothesised. No statistically significant relationship was found between the ideological composition of select committees and LGNZ's lobbying success.	No
2	LGNZ's success is associated with structurally weaker governments.	LGNZ's lobbying outcomes were not statistically associated with either the size of coalitions/support parties forming a government nor the presence of a government majority in the select committee.	No
3	LGNZ's success is associated with favourable select committee recommendations.	Select committee recommendations were statistically associated with LGNZ's lobbying success. LGNZ's policy preferences were more likely to be incorporated into the final legislation when backed by the select committee.	Yes
4	LGNZ's success is associated with agency advice agreeing with its position.	The administering agency's agreement with LGNZ's policy proposals is statistically linked to a higher likelihood of success at the select committee level.	Yes
5	LGNZ's success is associated with endorsement from a coalition or support party.	Endorsement from coalition or support parties was statistically associated with better chances for LGNZ to achieve favourable changes.	Yes

LGNZ's success has links to government ideology, at least at the enactment stage

The statistical analysis found a significant association between some institutional factors and LGNZ's lobbying outcomes at both legislation and provision levels. Specifically, LGNZ's lobbying success depended on the prevailing ideology in Parliament. The data revealed that LGNZ had a higher likelihood of achieving favourable changes in legislation under centre-right than centre-left governments. This finding runs counter to the historical accounts in Chapter Six (Section 6.5.1.1), which suggested that local government should operate in a more

favourable environment under centre-left governments. It is important to reiterate here that the analysis focused on the formal policymaking process. Consequently, this finding cannot rule out the possibility that consultation on a given bill may have been undertaken before this formal stage and that the decision to have an early engagement with local government may depend on the parties in power.

LGNZ can affect favourable legislative changes through formal consultation processes

Statistical evidence highlighted formal processes for public consultation as mechanisms with which LGNZ can affect favourable changes within a given piece of legislation. When LGNZ obtained the endorsement of coalition/support parties in their submissions on bills, they were more likely to achieve favourable amendments in the final legislation. Additionally, relationships between the administering agency's position, the select committee's recommendation, and LGNZ's lobbying success are some of the most robust findings from the analysis, as proposals with positive endorsements from the administering agency and/or the select committee were more likely to be incorporated into the final legislation. While there were some cases in which the two entities disagreed on LGNZ's proposals, their decisions were found to be highly correlated: the select committee report almost always adopted the position of the report from the administering agency.

No statistical evidence links LGNZ's lobbying outcome and government's strength

No statistical evidence was found linking LGNZ's lobbying outcome and a government's structural strength, which was hypothesised to be negatively associated with LGNZ's chances of winning in legislation. LGNZ's success was found to be independent of the size of the coalition and support parties forming a government, with the assumption that the smaller these political parties are, the stronger a government should be. Similarly, no statistical relationship was identified between lobbying success and the presence of the government majority in a select committee, another indication of government strength.

8.3.2.2 Organisational Factors

Table 8-6 Summary of Chi-square test results for organisational factors

H	Hypothesis	Interpretation of statistical results	Hypothesis supported?
6	LGNZ's success differs across administering agencies.	Differences in the rate of adoption of LGNZ's recommendations in departmental reports of administering agencies (e.g., DIA) were not statistically significant. DIA, despite its supposed closer ties with local authorities, was no more likely than other agencies to align with LGNZ's policy position.	No
7	LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of argument it presents.	Emphasising the positive impact of a proposed legislative measure supported by LGNZ is linked to better lobbying outcomes. Meanwhile, highlighting the negative effects of a proposal was not statistically associated with favourable amendments for LGNZ.	Yes
8	LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of evidence it uses.	No statistical link was found between the type of evidence and lobbying success. However, further analysis shows that the use of evidence to support a claim is, in itself, statistically associated with a higher likelihood of favourable changes.	Yes
9	Testifying before the select committee is associated with LGNZ's success.	Testifying before select committees increased the likelihood of favourable changes in legislation, with statistically significant results.	Yes
10	LGNZ's success is associated with stronger support from local authorities.	A greater number of submissions from local authorities correlated with higher success, emphasising the importance of collective support.	Yes
11	LGNZ's lobbying success varies across its National Presidents.	No statistically significant differences in LGNZ's success were identified across LGNZ's National Presidents	No

Insider lobbying tactics can lead to success

The testing of the above hypotheses demonstrated that the use of certain insider/formal lobbying tactics was statistically associated with LGNZ's lobbying success. Successful tactics include testifying before the select committee, showing strength in numbers, and presenting evidence in support of a policy position, all of which linked to better lobbying outcomes for LGNZ. The probability of LGNZ securing amendments in legislation was significantly higher when LGNZ intended to testify before the select committee. There was also a positive

correlation between LGNZ's success and submissions from local authorities. This means that legislation that received a greater number of council submissions incorporated a greater number of changes that were in line with LGNZ's position. Amendments proposed by LGNZ that lacked any supporting evidence were less likely to be adopted in the departmental report compared to those that were accompanied by supporting evidence. Well-articulated policy positions were also found to have better chances of getting adopted, at least in cases where LGNZ fully supported the policy provision.

No evidence that lobbying success depend on relationship- or personality-based factors

Notably, the chi-square tests did not find a statistically significant relationship between LGNZ's National Presidents and its lobbying success. DIA, despite its close working relationship with local authorities, was also not found to be statistically different from other agencies, in terms of the tendency to agree with LGNZ's policy position. Findings were also inconclusive on the differences in LGNZ's chances of success across administering agencies. Overall, no evidence was found linking LGNZ's lobbying success with relationship- and personality-based organisational factors. Rather, the findings suggest that the more effective ways to convince policy advisers and decision-makers are to present evidence, articulate the position clearly, and demonstrate strength in numbers.

8.3.2.3 Issue-based factors

Table 8-7 Summary of Chi-square test results for issue-based factors

H	Hypothesis	Interpretation of statistical results	Hypothesis supported?
12	LGNZ's success varies with the policy position.	LGNZ had a higher success rate when lobbying within the Government's policy intent, while more contentious changes had lower success rates. Chi-square test confirmed this difference to be statistically significant.	Yes
13	LGNZ's success varies with the types of change it seeks.	Smaller or technical changes had greater success, while substantive changes faced lower likelihood of being adopted.	Yes
14	LGNZ's success varies across principles underlying its policy position.	No statistical evidence found that specific lobbying agendas (e.g., local democracy, funding, compliance costs) were associated with better or worse outcomes.	No
15	LGNZ's success varies across policy areas.	No statistically significant differences were identified in LGNZ's success rates across	No

H	Hypothesis	Interpretation of statistical results	Hypothesis supported?
		various select committees, which were used as proxies for different policy areas.	
16	LGNZ is less likely to succeed when there is strong opposition to its policy position.	Submissions from business groups, historically perceived as having differing policy positions from local government (Chapter Six, Section 6.5.2.2), did not demonstrate statistically significant effects on LGNZ's outcomes. This suggests that the level of opposition was not a determining factor in influencing results.	No
17	LGNZ is less likely to succeed on broad-based policy issues.	LGNZ had more success in legislation that received a greater number of submissions from groups and individual submitters. Further statistical analysis suggests this success may be due to better coordination among local authorities on salient issues. LGNZ's success in other select committees was not statistically different from what the association achieved under the Local Government and Environment Committee, which likely deals with more niche rather than publicly salient legislation.	No
18	LGNZ is more likely to succeed on complex or technical legislation.	Legislation deemed to be 'more technical' (measured by length) correlated with greater success for LGNZ, but this was more likely due to the higher number of amendments the association proposed on longer legislation.	No

Lobbying within the Government's policy generally yields better outcomes, but opposing does not always result in failure

An inverse relationship was found between the extent of change LGNZ sought and the likelihood of success, suggesting that the association is more effective when proposing specific technical adjustments rather than substantively contesting provisions of a bill. This greater success with technical changes is partly attributable to the role of administering agencies, which help ensure that any changes to bill remain aligned with government policy. However, opposing government policy does not always result in failure. Data shows that LGNZ succeeded in lobbying against one in three (30 of 93) of the legislative measures it fully opposed.

Non-significant and unreliable statistical relationships

Most of the issue-based factors examined did not show statistically significant relationships with LGNZ's lobbying success. Contrary to the expectation that certain local government principles would be more and less acceptable to central government than others, no statistical differences in odds of success were found across LGNZ's lobbying agenda. Similarly, policy areas captured through the select committee structure did not have a statistically significant relationship with LGNZ's lobbying success. Furthermore, the extent of lobbying opposition, measured in terms of the number of submissions from business and industry groups (see Section 6.5.2.2 for the rationale for this measure), was not found to be associated with LGNZ's lobbying success. Meanwhile, statistical associations involving public salience—measured by number of submissions received on a bill—and policy complexity—measured by the page length of a bill—were found to be unreliable, as these proxies were confounded by other variables, particularly the number of submissions from local authorities and the number of LGNZ comments on each piece of legislation.

8.4 Moving forward

This chapter examined LGNZ's lobbying outcomes and factors associated with success across 453 policy issues. LGNZ achieved favourable legislative outcomes on 56.7% of the issues analysed, including cases where it fully supported government proposals. Where LGNZ sought change, it achieved at least partial success in 48.67% technical amendment cases and in between 35.8 to 38.7% of cases involving substantive opposition to government policy intent. Overall, these findings indicate a moderate capacity for LGNZ to influence policy, when influence is observed in terms of the alignment between the association's policy preferences and legislative outcomes.

Using chi-square tests across these policy issues identified general patterns and statistically significant associations between specific institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors and LGNZ's lobbying success. Findings confirm the importance of insider tactics and formal policy channels. Specifically, LGNZ's lobbying success is statistically associated with testifying before the select committee, successfully coordinating a strong showing of submissions from local authorities (strength in numbers), and presenting claims that are supported by evidence. Furthermore, the position taken by the relevant administering agency and the

recommendation of the select committee were identified as institutional factors that play a decisive role in LGNZ's lobbying success. Findings also suggest that lobbying outcomes vary based on political context, with success resulting from obtaining endorsement from coalition or support parties and occurring more often under certain governments. Finally, results showed that LGNZ achieved greater success when pursuing technical adjustments or operating within the government's policy intent.

This quantitative analysis, being the first study of its kind on LGNZ, has captured an important aspect of LGNZ's advocacy and the operation of New Zealand's policymaking system. However, because the analysis only focuses on the formal stages of the policy process, it therefore provides only a partial picture of LGNZ's lobbying behaviour and outcomes. Focusing on official documents and observable outcomes necessarily excludes the internal politics, norms, conflicts, and power dynamics that shape policymaking. The findings thus cannot explain the mechanisms underlying the observed statistical relationships.

Accordingly, to examine the mechanisms and narratives underpinning the statistical associations, the next chapter moves to the qualitative phase, which is centred on a case study of the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill (No. 2). This subsequent analysis, intended to offer a more nuanced and detailed picture of LGNZ's lobbying success, will use thematic insights drawn from interviews and supplementary documents to contextualise, refine, and possibly challenge the quantitative findings. Ultimately, these dual strands of evidence are considered together and discussed in Chapter Ten. A central feature of that final discussion is Table 10-1, which provides a comparative synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative results to identify the factors most consistently associated with LGNZ's successful advocacy.

Understanding the factors in LGNZ’s lobbying outcome: A case study of the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill (No. 2)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the statistical findings of the previous chapter by exploring in greater depth the factors that shaped LGNZ’s lobbying outcomes on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2 (the Bill). As will be demonstrated later, the use of the Bill as a case study offers an example of LGNZ’s lobbying success and reflects many of the factors identified as statistically significant in the quantitative phase. Overall, the chapter highlights the strategic use of both insider and outsider tactics, the influence of the political context, and the interplay of multiple institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors in achieving favourable outcomes for LGNZ.

The data sources for this chapter include interviews, central and local government documents, news articles, and academic publications. Following efforts to engage a broad range of actors directly involved in the case study Bill, five stakeholders representing central and local government as well as academia participated in formal interviews (see Table 9-1 below). Across the five interviews, explanations regarding LGNZ’s lobbying success with respect to the Bill tended to align, and when interviewees were asked at the end to suggest alternative explanations for LGNZ’s success beyond those that had already been covered by the interview schedule, no new perspectives were identified.

Table 9-1 List of interviewees

Participant	Description
Tahi	Central government official involved in the policy development of the Bill
Rua	Central government official involved in the policy development of the Bill
Toru	Central government official involved in the policy development of the Bill
Wha	Representative from the local government sector
Rima	Academic expert on local government

Of the local government documents reviewed, the 7 September meeting agenda of Horowhenua District Council (2016) served as an important source to anchor the analysis of LGNZ's lobbying strategy against the Bill. The document provides a detailed record of LGNZ's political framing and its coordinated approach to advocacy. Evidence from this source was corroborated with material from other councils, interviews, and central government. This triangulation confirmed that the strategies detailed in the agenda were observed and reported across the sector and recognised by decision-makers.

9.1.1 Chapter organisation

The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows. Section 9.2 gives background information regarding the Bill. Utilising evidence from interviews and documentary sources, Section 9.3 presents arguments and evidence explaining why LGNZ was regarded as successful in influencing the Bill. Section 9.4 provides an analysis of the interactions between LGNZ, the government, and various stakeholders during the policy and legislative process, underscoring the impact of both LGNZ's strategic lobbying and the shifting political context on the final outcome of the Bill. Section 9.5 examines which factors contributed to LGNZ's successful lobbying efforts with respect to the Bill, and Section 9.6 summarises the findings and sets out the next steps for this thesis.

9.2 The 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2

The Bill was one of the steps in a series of amendments the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA02) under the Fifth National Government (2008—2017). When LGA02 was passed, under a Labour–Alliance Government, it gave local authorities a stronger role in community governance and leadership (Cheyne, 2008). The LGA02 replaced the restrictive *ultra vires* principle in its 1974 predecessor, which limited the actions local government could take to those explicitly authorised by law, with the more flexible power of general competence. This change allowed local authorities to undertake a broader range of activities within the scope of their mandate. The LGA02 also introduced new purposes for local government, including enabling democratic decision-making at the local level and promoting community well-being across social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions, both in the present and for future generations.

The 2008 general election saw a shift from a Labour-led to a National-led Government. The new Government introduced an extensive reform agenda for local government with accountability, efficiency, and increased scale as the main stated policy objectives (Reid & Macaulay, 2018). These reforms were criticised for sidelining core local government values such as local democracy and autonomy (McKinlay, 2016; Reid 2018; Reid & Macaulay, 2018). Shifting away from its predecessor's approach, which had emphasised a central-local government partnership, to focus instead on increasing central government oversight of local authorities and pushing for council amalgamation, the National-led Government introduced other measures that involved reducing consultation requirements, redefining councils' roles, and expanding ministers' intervention powers. These changes were implemented through three major amendments to the LGA02, as summarised in Table 9-2 below.

Table 9-2 Summary of local government reforms under the 2008 National-led Government
source: Reid and Macaulay (2018)

Amendment Act	Changes
LGA 2002 Amendment Act 2010	• Renamed the Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) the Long-Term Plan (LTP). • Removed references to consultation and participation in the LTP's purpose. • Eliminated the requirement for direct citizen involvement in identifying community outcomes. • Removed the requirement to report on achievement of outcomes. • Introduced a list of core services. • Introduced non-financial and financial benchmarks for infrastructure services.
LGA 2002 Amendment Act 2012	• Revised Section 10 (the purpose of local government), replacing the obligation to promote well-being with a requirement to deliver good quality local infrastructure, public services, and regulatory functions. • Defined the leadership roles of mayors and allowed them to access additional powers. • Changed the rules governing council re-organisation to favour establishment of unitary councils. • Added Section 17A, which requires regular reviews of the way in which councils deliver services. • Introduced significant ministerial intervention powers where there is a 'problem.' • Introduced fiscal benchmarks and gave the Minister of Local Government new intervention powers.
LGA 2002 Amendment Act 2014	• Required the adoption (without consultation) of "Significance and Engagement Policies."

Amendment Act	Changes
	- Reduced the requirement to consult on annual plans and budgets such that consultation is only needed where significant change is proposed. - Introduced a new duty to review the efficiency of service delivery. - Introduced prudent financial benchmarks.

The Bill sought to build on these earlier reforms by pushing for more council services, including water and transport, to be shared through the greater use of council-controlled organisations (CCOs).⁶ It proposed empowering the Local Government Commission (LGC) to initiate council reorganisations following LGC's own review. Under the provisions of the Bill, these reorganisations could involve transferring council functions into CCOs without the approval of councils or their communities. These CCOs would be funded based on a mandatory funding formula agreed upon by the councils and would have the ability to amend councils' development contribution policies. In addition, the Bill granted the Minister of Local Government the ability to establish performance measures for local government and to direct the LGC through an annual statement of expectations.

These proposed changes raised significant concerns within local government. The then Rangitikei Mayor Andy Watson warned that granting CCOs extensive powers over budgets and bylaws would strip councils of their control over rates, budgets, and key local decisions (Rangitikei District Council, 2016). Watson described the reforms as "forced amalgamation by another name," developed with little public knowledge (p. 34). Dunedin City Council (2016) similarly argued that the proposed powers for water services CCOs mirrored Auckland's Watercare Services Limited model. It warned that the Bill would allow this model to be implemented nationwide, weakening the authority of elected members.

Table 9-3 LGNZ's policy position on the Bill

	Policy issue	LGNZ position
1	Requiring local authorities to agree on a funding formula for multiply owned CCOs	fully opposed
2	Establishing permanent substantive or multiply owned CCOs	significant objections
3	Omitting voting weight according to the size of council shareholdings	fully opposed
4	Allowing multiply owned CCOs to amend development contribution policies of local authorities	fully opposed

⁶ CCOs independently manage council facilities and deliver services and activities to council residents.

5	Omitting individual shareholder's agreement between a council and a multiply owned CCO	fully opposed
6	Empowering the Minister to direct the LGC's priorities and performance	fully opposed
7	Lowering of the threshold required for LGC to initiate a reorganisation investigation	fully opposed
8	Modernising LGC's accountability and reporting framework	fully supported
9	Excluding some information on reorganisation investigation from OIA 1982	fully opposed
10	Allowing LGC to transfer statutory and non-statutory functions between councils	fully supported
11	Allowing the LGC to transfer activities from a council to a CCO	fully opposed
12	Reintroducing mandatory polls for certain types of reorganisation proposals	fully supported
13	Empowering the Minister to set performance measures for council activities	fully opposed

Table 9-3 above provides a detailed list of the Bill's provisions and LGNZ's corresponding policy positions. In summary, LGNZ (2016b) opposed the provisions around reorganisation, arguing that these disregarded the need for community consultation around, demonstrable community support for, and local authority involvement in the investigation and decision-making processes regarding reorganisations or the management of council assets. The association also raised concerns about the potential loss of the LGC's independence if the Bill were enacted.

The government had introduced the Bill with the rationale that "councils need new ways to manage finances, improve efficiencies, and create better value for ratepayers" (Lotu-liga, 2016a). Interview Participants Tahi, Toru, and Rua, the three government officials knowledgeable of the Bill's development, shared their own thoughts about the purpose of this Bill. Participant Tahi suggested that efficiency was likely the primary motivation behind it: "I think [the Bill] probably comes down to the idea that infrastructure benefits from scale, and having 67 separate water providers is seen as being inefficient." Participant Toru acknowledged that, at the time, there were real problems in the management of council assets; they described the Bill as the Government's effort to prompt local authorities to address these challenges.

Participant Rua observed that “National-led Governments tend to advocate for rationalisation, reducing the number of local authorities and achieving economies of scale.” Participant Toru suggested that the Bill was part of the government’s continued effort to “rationalise” local government, following amalgamation attempts in Hawkes Bay, Wellington, and Wairarapa that had been unsuccessful despite legislation enacted to ease this process. In the Cabinet paper laying out the Government’s policy direction for the Bill, National Minister Lotu-liga (2016b) shifted the focus from amalgamating councils to merging council services. In the same Cabinet paper, the minister acknowledged that community concerns about the loss of representation posed a barrier to the changes the government had sought.

Like the amendment Acts of 2010, 2012, and 2014, the 2016 Bill highlighted the policy divide between the National-led Government elected in 2008—with its emphasis on economic efficiency—and local government, which sought to preserve local democracy. This difference in core values may have shaped how local government views were considered and addressed in the policy process. LGNZ (2016b, p. 5) criticised the Government for not involving local government in the Bill’s preparation, describing it as “drafted in a very hasty way” and “under done.” News reports also stated that the introduction of the Bill caught local government by surprise (Morris, 2016a). Interview participant Wha, a representative from the local government sector, confirmed that LGNZ only became aware of the Bill following its first reading in Parliament.

Auckland Council’s (2016) subsequent actions illustrated the pressure on the sector, having to seek an extension to the submission deadline from the select committee and delegate approval authority in case the extension was refused. Similarly, Waimate District Council (2016) convened an Extraordinary Council Meeting immediately before the deadline solely to approve its submission.⁷ The limited time for consultation meant that sector coordination had to be immediate. As will be discussed later, the initial lack of engagement with local government was considered by some interviewees to be a deliberate government decision,

⁷ An Extraordinary Council Meeting is called to address specific, often urgent, issues that cannot wait until the next scheduled ordinary meeting.

reflecting a consensus that the policy development process for the Bill could have been improved.

9.3 LGNZ's lobbying success on the Bill and attributed influence

9.3.1 The final legislation was generally favourable to local government

As a case study, the 2016 Bill is a useful example of LGNZ's lobbying success. Drage (2016) described the Bill's introduction as marking a low point in central–local government relations in New Zealand but viewed its eventual outcome as evidence of the strength of LGNZ as local government's unified political voice. Interviews also confirm a successful lobbying outcome for LGNZ in this case. Participant Wha, A local government representative, noted that LGNZ was “very successful in the sense that the parts [the association was] unhappy with got withdrawn.” Participant Tahī also observed that the Bill had changed, with the provisions [LGNZ] opposed ultimately being “significantly watered down.” The developments in the legislation that defined LGNZ's success took three years, two Governments, and steady lobbying from LGNZ and other stakeholders to materialise.

Table 9-4 LGNZ's lobbying progress on the Bill

	Policy issue	LGNZ	Department	Select Committee (Nat-led Gov)	SOP (Lab-led Gov)	Act
1	Requiring local authorities to agree on a funding formula for multiply owned CCOs	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	successful	successful
2	Establishing permanent substantive or multiply owned CCOs	significant objections	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
3	Omitting voting weight according to the size of council shareholdings	fully opposed	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
4	Allowing multiply owned CCOs to amend local authorities' development contribution policy	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
5	Omitting individual shareholder's agreement between a council and a multiply owned CCO	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
6	Empowering the Minister to direct the LGC's priorities and performance	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
7	Lowering of the threshold required for LGC to initiate a reorganisation investigation	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	successful	successful
8	Modernising LGC's accountability and reporting framework	fully support	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
9	Excluding some information on reorganisation investigation from OIA 1982	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
10	Allowing LGC to transfer statutory and non-statutory functions between councils	fully support	partly successful	partly successful	partly successful	partly successful
11	Allowing the LGC to transfer activities from a council to a CCO	fully opposed	not tackled	unsuccessful	partly successful	partly successful
12	Reintroducing mandatory polls for certain types of reorganisation proposals	fully support	not tackled	successful	successful	successful
13	Empowering the Minister to set performance measures for council activities	fully opposed	successful	successful	successful	successful

Note: A high-resolution copy is provided in Appendix D

Table 9-4 above illustrates LGNZ’s lobbying progress on the Bill, showing how incremental changes across key policymaking milestones reflect increasing success, culminating in stronger outcomes under the Labour-led Government compared with the more limited gains achieved under the National-led Government. A closer examination of these policy issues revealed that the government-majority select committee had recommended changes to address some of LGNZ’s key concerns, but without fundamentally altering the policy intent behind the provisions. For example, the committee introduced greater transparency to the process by which the Minister of Local Government to set priorities for the LGC (Policy Issue 6), which LGNZ viewed as undermining the Commission’s independence, but it maintained the Minister’s proposed power under the Bill. Similarly, while LGNZ succeeded in narrowing the scope of the power to require councils to amend their development contribution policies—from applying to all CCOs to applying only to water services CCOs (Policy Issue 4)—that power itself remained in place. Such minor alterations left LGNZ’s concerns only partially addressed.

Provisions which raised major concerns from LGNZ but remained unchanged included Policy Issue 7, which LGNZ saw as another form of amalgamation, and Policy Issue 1, which the association perceived as undermining councils’ autonomy over rates and expenditures. That these provisions were not altered demonstrated the fundamental policy differences that existed between LGNZ and the National-led Government at the time. Such policy differences were not as great between LGNZ and the succeeding Labour-led Government, which completely dropped these provisions and made additional changes that were more fully aligned with LGNZ’s policy views. Ultimately, LGNZ achieved most of its desired outcomes for the Bill, with the most contentious provisions dropped.

As shown in Table 9-4, LGNZ achieved success in certain provisions (Policy Issues 2, 3, and 8) during the early stages under the National-led Government that did not continue under the Labour-led one. The Supplementary Order Paper (SOP)⁸ introduced by the Labour-led Government deleted significant portions of the Bill, as reported by the select committee under the previous Government, thereby negating the amendments LGNZ had previously

⁸ A Supplementary Order Paper is an official parliamentary document used to propose amendments to a bill that is already being considered by the legislature.

secured. Following the operational definition of lobbying success used in this thesis, these provisions were ultimately classified as unsuccessful. Although LGNZ secured amendments at the select committee stage, the subsequent deletion of certain parts of the Bill meant that the final legislative outcome did not reflect the specific policy changes LGNZ had sought. Because this thesis measures lobbying success based on the final legislative outcome rather than intermediate stage wins, these cases were classified as unsuccessful. Also, because their submissions do not necessarily indicate whether LGNZ preferred the status quo resulting from the deletion of these provisions over the amended versions it had proposed at the select committee stage, success was assessed based on whether LGNZ's preferred amendments were reflected in the final legislation. In the case of Policy Issue 3, LGNZ opposed the omission of a voting weight provision based on council shareholdings in a CCO and successfully secured its inclusion at the select committee stage. However, this provision was ultimately removed through the SOP under the Labour-led Government. As such, LGNZ's lobbying around this provision was considered unsuccessful.

During the Committee of the Whole House stage of the Bill, the then Labour Minister of Local Government, Nanaia Mahuta, indicated that the amendments proposed by the government were part of a staged reform process. Specifically, she mentioned that the amended Bill represented "stage one of a reform programme for the Local Government Commission (LGC) and its role in the local government reorganisation process" (Mahuta, 2019). In other words, LGNZ may have been able to achieve success on these policy issues in subsequent legislation, but for the 2016 Bill itself, these provisions had to be classified otherwise.

9.3.2 Decision-makers recognised LGNZ's influence on the legislation

Decision-makers have credited LGNZ with influencing the final legislation in ways that made it more favourable to local government than the version as originally introduced. Throughout the readings of the Bill, several Members of Parliament (MPs) from different political parties addressed the role LGNZ played in the evolution of the Bill. There appears to be a consensus that LGNZ, as a participant in the policymaking process, was far from a passive. Instead, its active lobbying drove parliamentary debates, prompted closer scrutiny of the Bill's provisions, and ultimately steered the final legislation in favour of local government.

For example, Green Party MP Jan Logie commended LGNZ for successfully compelling the government to take notice of the association's views on the Bill. Her statement implies that LGNZ's input was instrumental in refining the Bill to ensure it was more acceptable to local government.

I do want to acknowledge Local Government New Zealand and the leaders in local government for forcing the Government to listen and for working so hard with the officials to significantly improve this piece of legislation, and I do acknowledge that it has been significantly improved. (Logie, 2017)

National Party MP Andrew Bayly acknowledged that the National-led Government's decision to extend the select committee's consideration of the Bill was specifically made to allow for meaningful input from LGNZ:

[T]he bill was introduced into the House some time ago, back in 2016, but the government has deliberately delayed its finalisation to take into account the views of...Local Government New Zealand and the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM), as well as other relevant parties. (Bayly, 2017)

This decision can be interpreted as an implicit admission from that government of a significant misstep: having not adequately engaged with LGNZ warranted the delay and the subsequent reconsideration of aspects of the Bill based on local government's views.

One of the most explicit statements linking LGNZ's advocacy to changes in the Bill came from New Zealand First MP Ron Mark during the final deliberation on the Bill. He affirmed LGNZ's impact, commending the association for its well-coordinated advocacy on the Bill.

I really congratulate Local Government New Zealand and the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers for their concerted representations, and I congratulate the Minister for the amendments to the bill, which see those errors corrected through the SOP. (Mark, 2019)

Mark went on to describe the Labour-led Government's response in terms of the corrections it made to "errors" in the Bill via a Supplementary Order Paper (SOP) addressing LGNZ's concerns, thus acknowledging a tangible outcome of the association's influence.

9.4 The sequence of events leading to the outcome

9.4.1 LGNZ successfully framed debates on the Bill

LGNZ's lobbying efforts centred on "targeting the anti-local democratic aspects" of the Bill (Horowhenua District Council, 2016, p. 38). The association anticipated strong reactions to many of the Bill's provisions from its members, noting that, "membership will react very badly once the implications are known" (LGNZ, 2016d, p. 2). To engage its members and support the preparation of the association's own submission, LGNZ undertook a range of activities. These included delivering a presentation to inform councils about the Bill and its implications, providing a memorandum with a clause-by-clause analysis of the Bill, and distributing talking points for chief executive officers (LGNZ, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f). LGNZ also prepared a consultation document to consolidate its own submission (LGNZ, 2016g).

Through these activities, LGNZ highlighted several risks associated with the Bill, including increased centralised control and potential interference with local assets, while emphasising the importance of local discussion and the need for transparency and accountability. Notably, LGNZ's technical support helped smaller councils engage substantively with the Bill. For example, Rangitikei District Council (2016) policy advisors were informed of the Bill's implications through an LGNZ-organised webinar. Similarly, Wairoa District Council (2016a) used LGNZ's pre-circulated submission to guide internal discussion and decision-making.

LGNZ was concerned that the full potential impact of the Bill was not understood by the public at the time of its introduction to Parliament (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). At the same time, it was mindful that "opposition to the Bill's provisions" could be misinterpreted as opposition to delivering value, risking "community and parliamentary support for [its] policy position" if this perception was not carefully managed (p. 39). The association took a deliberate approach to advocating against certain provisions of the Bill while avoiding antagonism toward its policy intent. LGNZ considered that to be seen as credible, part of the argumentation the association employed had to be consistent with the concept that councils

must always strive to deliver value—on the understanding that what constitutes value and its effective delivery must remain a matter for discussion between elected members of a community and the citizens in that community. Additionally, LGNZ appealed to specific ideological values to strengthen its stance: “The assets at issue are locally owned, and, from a property rights perspective, interfering with the decision-rights of the asset owners is not acceptable” (Horowhenua District Council, 2016, p. 38).

LGNZ emphasised councils’ commitment to efficiency, pointing out that the association’s members were “working hard to review operational delivery models and are delivering real savings to ratepayers.” (Horowhenua District Council, 2016, p. 38). While CCOs were acknowledged by LGNZ as one way of achieving savings, the association maintained that local government was capable of pursuing value independently. Noting the existence of the Local Government Excellence Programme, a locally driven initiative to enhance community understanding of council performance, LGNZ suggested that “further rules, regulations, or interventions by the Crown are not necessary and are unwarranted” (p. 38).

This framing of achieving efficiency without necessarily compromising local democracy either reflected prevailing sector attitudes or was adopted by certain councils, indicating some success in LGNZ’s efforts to shape the agenda surrounding the issue. For example, Dunedin City Council (2016) adopted a position on its submission that closely aligned with LGNZ’s nuanced approach. While supporting the Bill’s stated goals of improving service delivery and infrastructure provision and endorsing greater flexibility for local authorities to meet community needs, this council expressed strong concerns about the proposed centralising mechanisms. Ashburton District Council (2016), pointing to concrete examples of successful local collaboration, argued that Crown intervention was unwarranted. This council questioned the need for central directives, noting that the outcomes sought by the Bill were already achievable under existing legislation.

LGNZ’s approach of advocating without antagonism also succeeded in ensuring its message resonated beyond the local government sector: the chosen framing of its concerns permeated the media and were evident throughout the policymaking process, found in submissions, officials’ advice, select committee deliberation, and parliamentary debates. Participant Tahi

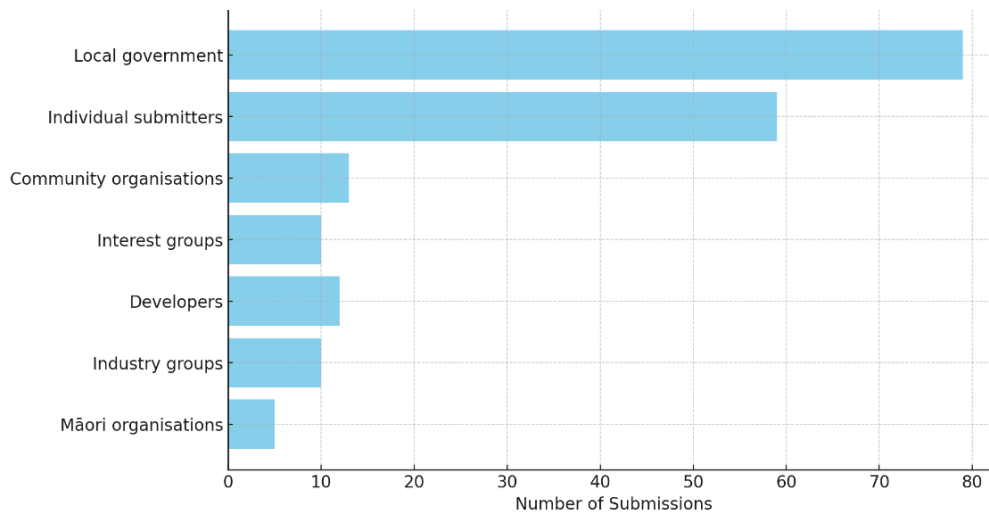
highlighted how effectively LGNZ had framed the discussion of the Bill, noting the association's ability to elevate what could otherwise have been seen as an "element of public administration" into a "bad news story" in the media. Overall, LGNZ shaped the debates on the Bill across various platforms. Ensuring the association communicated its message clearly and effectively was a crucial element of its lobbying practice that proved vital to its success.

9.4.2 Councils swiftly and consistently rallied behind their association's position

The media reported a strong reaction to the introduction of the Bill from local government, with councils declaring the Bill as an attack on local democracy and even labelling it "amalgamation by stealth" (Morris, 2016). Participant Wha recalled that LGNZ had made sure their members were aware of the Bill being in the House and its potential implications for local government. The then Central Hawke's Bay Deputy Mayor Ian Sharp described opposition to enabling reorganisation "without council or ratepayer input or consultation" as "the universal feeling at the [2016 LGNZ] conference" (Harper, 2016). Indeed, 97 percent of LGNZ members voted in favour of a remit for LGNZ to oppose any provision in the Bill that would, directly or indirectly, bypass requirements for community consultation, demonstrable community support, and the active involvement of local authorities in reorganisation investigations and decisions affecting councils or their assets (Waitomo District Council, 2016).

LGNZ organised and facilitated lobbying activities that emphasised local authorities' united opposition to the Bill. For example, they encouraged each of their members to submit feedback to ensure that the select committee would hear directly from all local authorities (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). The goal of this effort was for the committee to "fully appreciate the depth of feeling amongst councils and how the proposed changes may impact locally" (p. 39). Figure 9-1 below shows that local government had the strongest participation in the submission process. Participant Tahi recalled that no councils appeared to support the Bill, saying: "I do not remember any councils submitting in support of the Bill. ... Most council submissions would say, 'We support the LGNZ and SOLGM submissions.'"

Figure 9-1 Number of submissions on the Bill
data source: DIA (2016)



Signalling a deliberate intent to engage in political advocacy, this united front of councils against the Bill did more than present written submissions. The association asked local authorities to attend the select committee hearings to convey the level of council support for LGNZ's submission (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). Dunedin City Council (2016), Wairoa District Council (2016b), and Christchurch City Council (2016) were among those that committed to speak in support of the LGNZ submission. This coordinated approach reinforced LGNZ's decision to stage a highly visible united front at the hearings. When the time came, the then LGNZ President Lawrence Yule appeared alongside local government leaders from across the country to warn the select committee about their concerns regarding the Bill (Stylianou, 2016). In his speech before the committee, Yule emphasised the strong backing LGNZ had from local government, saying:

I would like to acknowledge the presence of those mayors and regional chairs who have chosen to travel to Wellington to express their support for LGNZ's submission—such is the strength of feeling. (Yule, 2016)

Councils were encouraged to adopt a proactive approach to lobbying, including by engaging directly with their communities and their local MPs (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). LGNZ aimed to make local government concerns highly visible and ensure they were understood and appreciated by decision-makers and the community. This strategy of

combining political and public engagement was evident in the actions of member councils. Waimate Mayor Craig Rowley urged mayors in an open letter to use “every available means to raise community awareness” of the Bill’s potential impacts and approached the Minister of Local Government to propose that LGNZ help refine the legislation (Waimate District Council, 2016). Wairoa District Council (2016a) ran community campaigns highlighting risks to local control and democracy while Invercargill City Council ran a full-page advertisement in the Southland Times rallying opposition (Woolf, 2016).

Participant Tahi recalled that the Minister of Local Government had attempted to work around LGNZ, saying:

The Minister was looking at changing his strategy and trying to sideline LGNZ by going directly to supportive councils. But that strategy didn't really work because of that unity—no one supported.

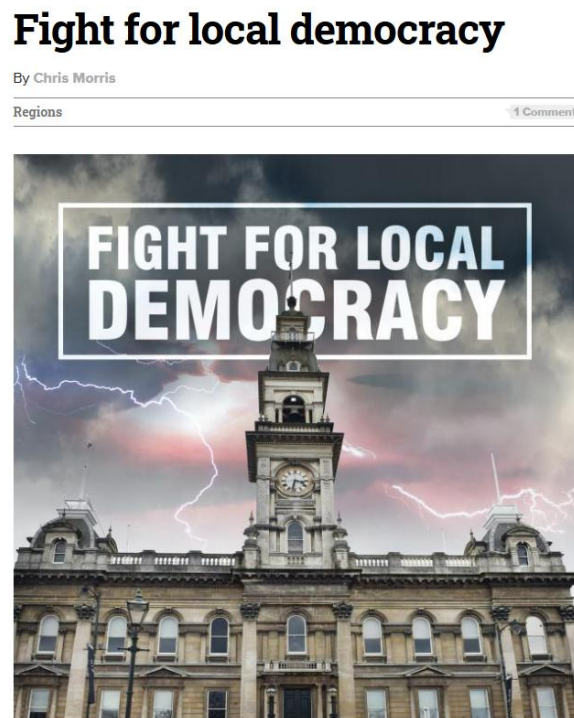
9.4.3 LGNZ and local authorities actioned a widespread media campaign

LGNZ’s lobbying strategy to shape the Bill included a coordinated media campaign (Horowhenua District Council, 2016) that gained significant nationwide media coverage, effectively highlighting the principles most important to its membership. An update to local authorities noted the “substantial and continued coverage in media up and down the country,” with the “majority of media comment” reflecting the key concerns of local authorities (p. 39).

Interview participants consistently highlighted the intense, negative publicity the government endured over the Bill, with LGNZ playing a lead role in driving this narrative. The association’s media campaign was viewed as an important component of its lobbying strategy that increased public awareness of local government’s serious concerns over the Bill. Participant Toru even considered that LGNZ’s outsider lobbying efforts through the media achieved better outcomes than their insider efforts since the association had had limited involvement in the policy development process.

Figure 9-2 below provides a notable example of the media commentary being shaped by the concerns of local authorities: an article in the Otago Daily Times, which framed the Bill as a “fight for the future of local democracy” (Morris, 2016). This narrative closely aligned with LGNZ’s messaging, contrasting with the Government’s focus on economic efficiency.

Figure 9-2 The Otago Daily Times article
source: Morris (2016)



Participant Wha explained that when LGNZ strongly opposes a proposed legislation, as it did with the 2016, this dissatisfaction is echoed by mayors on the ground. A key outsider lobbying tactic involves “speaking to local media,” resulting in “really difficult stories for ministers to have to respond.” That this approach was taken in LGNZ’s lobbying against the Bill was corroborated by Participant Rua, who noted that there had been “a lot of media coverage” featuring councils “speaking out against [the Bill].”

Mayors and other officials were quoted in various newspapers at the time, describing the Bill as “draconian,” “amalgamation by stealth,” and “the death of democracy.” (Hanne, 2016; Scoop, 2016a; Woolf, 2016). While they criticised the government for what they called its “fiendish and cunning manoeuvres,” media editorials accused it of “dressing the Bill in the fiction that efficiency is the be-all and end-all of government” (Jackson, 2016; McKay, 2016). Further complaints targeted the Bill for giving the Minister of Local Government “enormous

power over [people’s] lives” and setting up the LGC to “do [the minister’s] dirty work” (Jackson, 2016). Expressing distrust in the legislative process, some mayors even threatened to take to the streets and urge communities to protest should the Bill “go the wrong way” (McKenzie-McLean, 2016; Morris, 2016a).

The government made its own attempts to control the media narrative on the Bill. For example, National Minister of Local Government Lotu-liga (2016c) wrote an opinion piece for Stuff.co.nz, arguing that the proposed changes were necessary to provide the infrastructure and services communities needed. In this piece, Minister Lotu-liga emphasised that the urgency of these issues did not allow “leisurely solutions,” and that some matters are “better managed regionally or nationally.” In another article, Minister Lotu-liga accused mayors and officials of electioneering in the context of upcoming local elections (Morris, 2016b). However, the headlines of the articles published during these times (listed in Table 9-5 below) demonstrate that media coverage generally leaned in favour of LGNZ.

Table 9-5 News articles relevant to the Bill

News article headline	Outlet
Fight for local democracy	Otago Daily Times
Govt push for amalgamation strongly criticised	Otago Daily Times
Minister: Criticism just electioneering	Otago Daily Times
Opinion: Council shakeup vital, says Minister of Local Government Peseta Sam Lotu-liga	Stuff
Local government bill poses threat to local democracy	Scoop
LGA bill proposals threaten erosion of local democracy	Scoop
Keep the ‘Local’ in Local Government	Scoop
Ratepayers should oppose water rule	Kapiti News
Bill is amalgamation by stealth	Stratford Press
Reforms not a ‘threat to democracy’	The Southland Times
Reforms must be public’s choice	The Southland Times
Mayor strongly opposes bill and power behind it	Hawkes Bay Today
New bill silences community voice	Hawkes Bay Today
Local government bill ‘political suicide’	Bush Telegraph
Mayor defends local decisions	Manawatu Standard
Editorial: So much for democracy	The Northland Age
Councils may be forced to merge	The Press
‘Anti-democratic’ law put on the backburner	The Press
Minister admits bill issues	The Timaru Herald

9.4.3.1 LGNZ's strategic display of solidarity at the select committee

LGNZ's lobbying strategy at the select committee stage incorporated the media coverage and featured appearances by mayors and regional chairs during its presentation to the committee (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). One news report described this moment:

LGNZ president and Hastings mayor Lawrence Yule was flanked by council representatives from around the country as he warned a parliamentary select committee of "grumpy mayors" concerned about plans to shake up the sector. (Stylianou, 2016)

Interview participants underscored this approach as a key strength in LGNZ's advocacy on the Bill. Participant Toru noted that:

at the select committee stage...LGNZ did quite a set piece and brought the media along...to their oral submission to the public hearing. So, they had media there, and the LGNZ President gave the submission, and they made a lot of publicity around it.

Participant Tahi reinforced this perspective with a similar recollection:

LGNZ had made a whole media thing of it. ...They flew a whole bunch of mayors to Wellington and [appeared] in front of the select committee as a united front. Have not seen anything like it since.

9.4.4 A "revolving door" of Ministers of Local Government

Reid (2018) suggests that the Minister of Local Government can heavily influence local government reforms, particularly when these matters receive limited attention from other ministers whose portfolios are not directly impacted. Interview participants consistently highlighted the significant roles played by successive Ministers of Local Governments in shaping the outcome of the Bill. Additionally, they identified the ministers' personal preferences and political stances as factors influencing the closeness of each of their relationships with LGNZ and, in turn, the association's level of influence over local government policies.

Under the 2008 National-led Government, there were six Ministers of Local Government, with the last three overseeing the Bill. Green Party MP Eugenie Sage (2016) described this turnover as a “revolving door,” that was a key factor in the lack of effective liaison with local government during the Bill’s development. Participant Wha observed that as ministers changed, those who followed were less committed to pushing the changes through.

Over the course of the Bill, interviewees and other sources portray three distinct Ministers of Local Government: one with firm views on local government, a successor who struggled amidst strong sector opposition, and one who took a more conciliatory approach. Overall, interviews corroborated by other sources show that ministerial changes were pivotal, reshaping central government’s relationship with LGNZ and influencing legislative outcomes.

9.4.4.1 The Minister who vowed structural change in local government

Minister Paula Bennett, who had set the Bill in motion, was characterised by those interviewed for this thesis as having a certain view of councils, that “local government is there to do its job,” and that their job was to focus primarily on “good quality infrastructure” (Participant Toru). Bennett publicly stated after the National-led Government’s re-election in 2014 that she had specifically requested the local government portfolio, indicating that she had plans for the sector (Bennett, 2015).

Minister Bennett pursued local government reforms consistent with her views. At the LGNZ conference, she outlined her plans to merge council services rather than councils themselves, a shift in approach after three previous amalgamation proposals had been rejected by public polls or submissions (Bennett, 2015). Bennett argued that local government required significant structural reform to support economic development, infrastructure improvements, and job creation—the needs she deemed most salient for communities. She expressed disappointment over the lack of support from councils for reorganisation, suggesting that local elected members were distracted by debates over form rather than function and with the notion of bureaucrats deciding what local democracy should look like.

Minister Bennett made remarks that appeared dismissive of mayors' concerns, stating, "I am as tired as communities are of having an argument over how many mayors there should be and over whom is bigger than whom and which area will dominate" (Bennett, 2015). These comments caused unease within local government, as reflected in news reports (e.g., Hanne, 2016). Reid (2018) suggested that communities' rejection of earlier amalgamation proposals meant that they were concerned about a potential loss of representation. Minister Bennett (2015) cautioned councils against interpreting the failed reorganisation attempts as the end of local government sector reform, asserting, "Let me be clear—there will be change."

While acknowledging Minister Bennett's strong intent to address real issues in local government, interviewees highlighted significant challenges in the policy development process for the Bill; the consensus was that it could have been handled better. Participant Tahī remarked, "The policy development process was a difficult time. ... [Officials] were being asked to do a lot of policy development in a very short space of time, and it was not done in a very good way." Participant Toru noted, "It was very difficult to get policy decisions to a level of detail that allowed for good drafting of the Cabinet paper." They described the process as "very high-level, very light touch" and confirmed that LGNZ had been excluded from policymaking, adding that even officials had had minimal involvement. Similarly, the Treasury's Regulatory Impact Analysis Team flagged "the lack of wider consultation with local government" and its impact on "council willingness and capability, and public acceptability" of certain provisions in the Bill (DIA, 2016b, p. 5).

9.4.4.2 The Minister who had to implement his predecessor's reform programme

National party Minister Peseta Sam Lotu-liga succeeded Minister Bennett as Minister for Local Government when she was promoted out of the Local Government portfolio in 2015. This new assignment followed Minister Lotu-liga's removal from the Corrections portfolio, after he faced significant criticism over allegations of "fight clubs" at Mt Eden Prison. The incident ultimately resulted in the Department of Corrections assuming management of the prison from a private operator. Media coverage suggests that Lotu-liga's appointment as Minister of Local Government was seen as a demotion (Edmonds, 2016). Reflecting the perception at that time, Participant Toru described Minister Lotu-liga's role in local government as a "have-another-go-at-being-a-minister kind of job."

Participant Toru described Minister Lotu-liga as having been tasked with implementing policies developed under his predecessor, with which he had had no prior involvement. There was a similar sense within local government that his appointment would not signal a significant shift in Minister Bennett's policy direction (Hanne, 2016). The challenge of enacting another minister's reform programme was identified as a key reason for Minister Lotu-liga's struggle to communicate and advocate for these changes within local government. As Participant Toru noted, by the time the Bill reached the select committee, local authorities were already up in arms.

Interviewees recalled Minister Lotu-liga meeting with councils to "try and sell [Minister] Bennett's reform" and described this effort as falling short of its objectives to "confront the issues" and "reduce the opposition." (Participants Toru; Tahi). Participant Tahi acknowledged his initial intent to work with local government on the Bill but noted a shift in his approach after unsuccessful attempts to promote the policy changes within the sector marked by reduced engagement with local government.

At the 2016 LGNZ conference, Minister Lotu-liga faced a "hostile reception" from mayors who expressed unified frustration over being excluded from the Bill's development (Morris, 2016a). While the Minister pledged to address their concerns, the then LGNZ Vice President and Dunedin Mayor Dave Cull expressed his belief the Bill had already strained the relations between central and local government. The Labour Party intensified the pressure on the government by withdrawing its support from the Bill, accusing Minister Lotu-liga of ignoring widespread opposition (Hudson, 2016a).

Participant Toru recalled that Minister Lotu-liga had had to navigate the most intense period of the Bill, dealing with aggressive lobbying from LGNZ and public backlash. They noted that the Minister had to manage the aftermath of the public demonstration of LGNZ's strong opposition at the select committee hearing. During this time, he had been a minister for just two years. Participant Tahi suggested that the minister had "lost control" over the Bill, and that this significantly affected its trajectory.

Minister Lotu-liga extended the select committee consideration of the Bill by six months. He explained that the extension would “allow for further policy consideration and drafting changes” to the Bill, enabling “more rigorous analysis of submissions and more constructive dialogue with the local government sector” (“Local body revamp,” 2016). He also requested that the select committee invite LGNZ to collaborate on addressing local government’s issues with the Bill (Waitomo District Council, 2016). As if to manage the perception of the government backtracking on its policies, he committed to addressing local government concerns “while still achieving the objectives of the reforms” (Small, 2016).

Many councils viewed this extension as a chance to ensure that their voices would be heard and that the issues raised during the select committee process would be taken seriously (Hudson, 2016b). Participant Rima also considered this extension a success for LGNZ, highlighting the effectiveness of local councils’ unified opposition to the Bill. They noted that it was “incredibly unusual” for such a significant piece of legislation to reach the select committee only to be walked back. Underscoring the strength of local authorities’ disapproval of the Bill, they characterised this response from the government as “definitely a back down...because of the opposition to it” Media reports also described these reactions from the government as bowing to pressure from local government representatives.

Minister Lotu-liga did not see the Bill through the select committee process. After about a year in the local government portfolio, he announced his resignation from politics and stepped down from his ministerial roles. News reports suggested that he may have been facing a potential demotion following Bill English’s appointment as Prime Minister (Radio New Zealand, 2016). Participant Tahi believed that his handling of the Bill was a contributing factor to the end of his political career.

9.4.4.3 The more senior and conciliatory Minister

The transition in the local government portfolio from Minister Lotu-liga to National Minister Anne Tolley was described by the interviewees as pivotal to the Bill’s outcome. Participant Toru remarked that the “policy direction changed a lot” under her leadership, and interviewees largely attributed the change in the Bill’s trajectory to her political experience and her more conciliatory approach towards local government.

Having held multiple ministerial roles across six Parliaments compared to her predecessor, whose tenure was shorter (three Parliaments) and had included fewer portfolios, Minister Tolley brought greater experience to the local government portfolio. With a longer political career, including more local government experience, Minister Tolley was described by Participant Tahī as being better positioned to manage relationships and navigate the political landscape. Unlike her predecessor, she was also a Cabinet Minister.

Participant Wha noted that it is uncommon for a senior Minister to take on the local government portfolio, as it is not typically considered a very important role in Cabinet. Participant Toru suggested that Minister Tolley's appointment may have been a conciliatory gesture by the National-led Government to ease tensions with local government with an election approaching. In contrast, Participant Tahī noted that even before Minister Lotu-Igā's resignation, there were already concerns within the government regarding his ability to effectively manage political opposition to the Bill.

The change in ministers was seen as particularly advantageous for LGNZ, with Minister Tolley being "more sympathetic" to local government (Participant Tahī). Her appointment signalled a shift not only in policy direction but also in the government's approach to engaging with local government. Minister Tolley's (2017) speech at the annual LGNZ Conference adopted a more amicable and collaborative tone than that of her predecessors; she pledged to maintain open dialogue with local government to ensure that ministers "fully understand the impact of central government decisions on you at the local level." On the Bill, she assured councils that Cabinet had "taken LGNZ's concerns seriously" and stressed her commitment to local autonomy and democratic involvement in decisions regarding amalgamation.

Participant Toru confirmed there was a "walk back" on the Bill under Minister Tolley's leadership. The select committee, with support from officials, rewrote some of the Bill's most contentious provisions. These changes were perceived as a response to pressure from local government and the product of a more collaborative approach between the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), the select committee, and LGNZ following the change in ministers. The next section explores these dynamics in more detail.

9.4.5 Outcomes associated with LGNZ collaboration with DIA officials and the select committee

Interviewees expressed similar views of LGNZ as an independent authority on local government matters. Participant Rua described the association as the “representative voice of the sector,” with this unique role as a source of its influence. Participant Rima emphasised LGNZ’s significant efforts in “conducting research on major issues for local councils” to offer the government independent advice from a sector lens. LGNZ was also acknowledged for at times fulfilling an advisory role while distinctly “not representing the government’s point of view” and offering “information that [the government’s] staff will not have” (Participant Wha).

LGNZ expressed confidence that productive changes to the Bill would occur if they presented recommendations that were “cogent, well-evidenced, and well-supported by the membership and their communities” (Horowhenua District Council, 2016, p. 38). Participant Wha corroborated this in broad terms, noting that “a really good submission backed up by evidence can be very helpful; sometimes it is just straight lobbying.” However, the process for the Bill needed confrontational and vocal tactics that ultimately prompted the government to invite LGNZ to the table to provide its technical expertise.

Councils endorsed LGNZ’s submission, with Dunedin City Council (2016) supporting the LGNZ submission in its entirety and Horizons Regional Council (2016) endorsing the joint approach in which LGNZ set the strategic principles while SOLGM provided the detailed, clause by clause analysis. Councils also deployed substantive evidence of their own to reinforce LGNZ’s claims. Ashburton District Council (2016) and Christchurch City Council (2016), in addition to submitting detailed clause-level critiques demonstrated that the Bill’s efficiency objectives were already achievable under existing legislation, citing long standing inter-council collaboration. Dunedin City Council (2016) put a spotlight on problems with the existing Watercare model to illustrate the potential harmful impacts the Bill could have in practice. Through the coordinated political endorsement and technical proof embedded in these submissions, councils actively reinforced LGNZ’s framing of its arguments against the bill.

9.4.5.1 DIA recommended many changes to the select committee after working with LGNZ

The case study demonstrated how LGNZ's expertise can be particularly valuable for lobbying when the association is able to engage with public officials, particularly those from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). Interviewees indicated that it is customary for DIA officials to consult with LGNZ during policy development before proposals are made public. However, Participant Rua emphasised that these officials act "on behalf of the minister, trying to meet [LGNZ's] concerns within the minister's objectives." The decision to consult depends on the direction of the government or the minister.

In the case of the Bill, there appeared to be an initial gap between LGNZ and DIA officials. In the Cabinet Paper for the Bill, Minister Lotu-liga (2016b) acknowledged that there had been "no detailed discussions with the local government sector" because of "tight policy development timeframes." Participant Tahi indicated that DIA officials at the time were operating under a directive to limit consultation with LGNZ. Participant Toru also recalled that "[LGNZ] was not part of the policymaking process." Participant Wha suggested that LGNZ may not have anticipated this disconnect, explaining that DIA officials "usually" work with the association, but for the "2016 amendment, they did not. It was all driven by the Minister [Bennett]."

Interviewees pointed to various factors that influenced the decision not to consult LGNZ, including ministerial and internal directives, the urgency of the legislative timeline, and the prevailing political climate. A common view emerged that more robust consultation could have improved the policy development process:

[DIA officials] were being asked to do a lot of policy development in a very short space of time that was not done in a very good way. There was some engagement at that point, but it was not adequate. (Participant Tahi)

And if you look at that timeframe and you say, well, that is too tight to do consultation then well, tough bikkies, we are not doing consultation. ... I think that is more the space [DIA officials] were in. (Participant Toru)

Tends to be more the parties on the right...that had been more sort of top-down approach to local government. ...I mean over the years—it has not always been [only parties on the right that have taken this top-down approach]. I mean, in 1989, when we had the restructuring of local government, that was a Labour Government. (Participant Rima sharing their perspective on central government's tendency to be less responsive to local government views.)

The turning point came at the select committee stage, which was marked by a shift towards better collaboration between the DIA and LGNZ. Participant Tahī noted that with the change from Minister Lotu-liga to Minister Tolley, the DIA gradually moved back towards a more collaborative relationship with LGNZ “to make the changes that would make [the Bill] palatable to [LGNZ] and workable.” Participant Tahī described this as a significantly more constructive approach.

Regarding the outcome, Participant Tahī confirmed that, following the change in approach, LGNZ successfully secured “technical [and] administrative changes to the Bill.” Supporting documents also validate this claim. DIA (2016) credited its collaboration with LGNZ for many of the changes recommended to the select committee, stating:

Submissions on the policy and technical aspects of the Bill have been helpful in informing the discussion and recommendations contained in this report. In many cases, this report recommends changes to the text of the Bill as a result of those submissions and further discussions with officers of LGNZ and SOLGM. (p. 27)

9.4.5.2 While the Bill largely stayed aligned with the Government's policy agenda, LGNZ's work with the select committee led to concessions

The select committee stage was considered the cornerstone of LGNZ's advocacy efforts for the Bill, during which LGNZ played a crucial role in shaping legislation and advancing the association's objectives (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). LGNZ strategically positioned itself within this process by seeking to be the last presenter to the committee hearing. By appearing at the end of the submission schedule, LGNZ could “bookend the SOLGM and

member submissions,” framing the narrative and emphasising the collective opposition to the Bill’s more controversial provisions (p. 39).

The summary of LGNZ’s lobbying progress on the Bill presented in Table 9-4 shows that the association’s engagement with the select committee led to some government concessions. During its second reading, Minister Tolley recognised the select committee for “having made a large number of changes that had been asked for” following feedback and discussions with local government. In turn, the select committee acknowledged LGNZ’s inputs, describing them as “particularly useful from both a policy and a technical standpoint” (Tolley, 2017b).

Participant Rua theorised that LGNZ’s achievements at the select committee stage were partly due to “a lot of resources that [the association] can devote to preparing” submissions. They also emphasised the expertise of LGNZ’s representatives, who are experienced politicians and adept public speakers. Notably, the then President Lawrence Yule, who presented LGNZ’s position on the Bill during a select committee hearing, went on to successfully enter Parliament as a National Party MP.

Participant Wha stressed the significance of the “strong” submissions contributed by LGNZ and its members, asserting that without them, the “outcomes would have been very different.” New Zealand First Party MP Ron Mark, a member of the select committee considering the Bill, also expressed his belief that the government would not have agreed to those changes without having received such strong opposition, primarily from local government:

The commentary on the Bill has 24 pages about the changes that the Local Government and Environment Committee made. Those changes were forced on the government because of the huge strength of opposition. (Mark, 2017)

LGNZ’s engagement with the select committee resulted in some realignment with the Bill to meet LGNZ policy preferences. However, as Table 9-4 shows, the select committee’s recommendations generally reflected official advice and were consistent with the government’s original policy intent.

Interview data supports this view. Participant Rua described the outcome as “a compromise between what [LGNZ] wanted and what the Government intended.” Participant Toru felt that LGNZ did not “get what it wanted out of the [National-led John] Key Government.” While they found the select committee report to be “more conciliatory” than the first draft, Participant Toru still deemed the recommendations to be “unacceptable to LGNZ.” Participant Tahī echoed these observations, suggesting that the government during the select committee stage remained focused on advancing the Bill “largely in its [original] form.”

There was scepticism about the select committee’s actual influence. Interviewees expressed opinions that its ability to introduce meaningful changes can be constrained by its alignment with the government. Participant Tahī observed that the government’s majority on the committee left insufficient support for significant amendments to the Bill. Participant Rua echoed this sentiment, noting that while the committee might have been sympathetic to LGNZ’s positions, its decisions were often guided by officials’ advice, which in turn reflected government policy. The officials’ primary role, they emphasised, was to implement the government’s policy objectives by shaping the Bill’s details accordingly.

Opposition parties also remained critical of the Bill, arguing that it still leaned toward centralisation and undermined local democracy. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that the select committee had made significant improvements to the Bill, thanks to the detailed submissions and strong representation it had received from local government. Labour Party MP Michael Wood remarked:

[The Bill] started off with a raft of ambitious proposals from the government that would have gutted local government democracy and created an incredible degree of centralisation within our system. When faced with a tidal wave of opposition at the select committee stage, the government has pulled back from some of the most egregious changes. ...It still has that noxious element of removing elements of local democracy within our system. (Wood, 2017)

Similarly, Green Party MP Jan Logie (2017) recognised that the Bill had been significantly improved through the select committee stage, but she emphasised that her party still held substantial concerns, particularly regarding aspects that the select committee members were unable to agree on despite the input from local government.

9.4.6 LGNZ divided the Government on the Bill

Because the ACT, United Future, and Māori Parties supported the National-led Government with parliamentary numbers, LGNZ’s lobbying strategy included engaging with these support parties. An update shared with local authorities on the progress of the Bill noted that LGNZ “met with all government support parties to outline the concerns of [its] members with the Bill” (Horowhenua District Council, 2016, p. 38). Participant Wha also confirmed that LGNZ had directly engaged with these parties to emphasise the potential negative impacts of the Bill on local government.

This strategy led to support parties withdrawing their backing of the Bill. At the United Future General Meeting, Leader Peter Dunne announced that his party’s intent to withdraw support for the Bill, citing opposition to the transfer of local assets without council consent (Scoop, 2016b). He wrote his recommendations to the then Minister Lotu-liga; these included council agreement on reorganisation and continued application of the Official Information Act to Local Government Commission’s reorganisation investigation—two of LGNZ’s key proposals. News reports suggest United Future’s withdrawal contributed to delays and to the reconsideration of the Bill (Morris, 2016c; Small, 2016b). The Māori Party officially withdrew its support by voting against the Bill during its second reading (see Table 9-6 below).

Table 9-6 Parliament votes on the Bill’s first and second readings

Party	First Reading	Second Reading	Change
National	59 Ayes	58 Ayes	-1 Aye***
Labour	32 Ayes	31 Noes**	Switched to Noes
Māori Party*	2 Ayes	2 Noes	Switched to Noes
ACT*	1 Aye	1 Aye	No change
United Future*	1 Aye	1 Aye	No change
Green	14 Noes	14 Noes	No change
NZ First	12 Noes	12 Noes	No change
Total Ayes	95	60	-35 Ayes
Total Noes	26	59	+33 Noes

** Government’s support parties ** MP David Cunliffe resigned *** PM John Key resigned*

Participant Wha argued that “[LGNZ] had successfully divided the Government by convincing their support parties that ... [voting favourably on the Bill] was not in their interest.” Conversations with Participant Toru supported this view, suggesting that the decisions of the support parties could have been driven by political pressures from local government. Reid (2018) also observed that significant delays in the progress of the Bill were partly due to “lobbying from local government and the withdrawal of support from the Government’s political allies” (p. 12).

Although the Labour Party had initially supported the Bill during its first reading, it later withdrew its support, citing the overwhelming opposition from local government (Hudson, 2016a). The Green Party and New Zealand First had opposed the Bill from the outset. While these parties were not part of the Government, their resistance played a significant role in shaping the public narrative about and bolstering overall opposition to the Bill.

9.4.6.1 LGNZ provided opposition parties ammunition against the government

Alongside its direct engagement with the government’s support parties, LGNZ sought to equip opposition parties with information that could be used to scrutinise and challenge the Bill. Participant Toru said that LGNZ, in its lobbying efforts, engaged closely with opposition parties, “giving them ammunition to use” against the Government. Consistent with this claim, LGNZ advised councils that it was strategically liaising with all opposition parties to provide them with detailed briefings on the Bill (Horowhenua District Council, 2016). This approach ensured opposition MPs were well equipped with the sector’s technical and substantive arguments that translated LGNZ’s position into effective interventions during parliamentary debates. As Participant Toru explained, the Bill conflicted with the core tenets of several opposition parties, and LGNZ leveraged this conflict strategically, a tactic that became particularly salient in the lead up to the general election that would take place before the Bill had made its way through the policymaking process.

The results of this tactic are observable in the parliamentary debates, where MPs scrutinising the Bill repeatedly referenced the strong opposition from LGNZ. However, the clearest evidence of the use of this tactic can be found in the minority view of the select committee

report,⁹ in which opposition parties acknowledged the “organised opposition and numerous submissions from councils” that highlighted the Bill’s various flaws (Local Government and Environment Committee, 2017, p.21). The contributors to this minority view also recognised LGNZ’s efforts to improve the provisions of the Bill on behalf of local government and, more importantly, supported the concerns raised by LGNZ, foreshadowing the policy direction of what would be the next Labour-led Government.

The minority view criticised the LGC’s power under the proposed legislation to initiate reorganisation investigations and to transfer council activities into jointly owned CCOs without input from communities or local authorities (Local Government and Environment Committee, 2017). It also questioned the Minister of Local Government’s authority to set expectations that would effectively influence the LGC’s work. Additionally, it highlighted the absence of mechanisms to ensure that jointly owned CCOs would align with the policies, priorities, and service levels of their shareholder councils. These concerns reflected a broader view shared by opposition parties and LGNZ regarding local autonomy and the importance of ensuring community involvement in the decisions that affect them.

Although one major party and one support party had formally withdrawn their support for the Bill, the National-led Government still appeared to have the necessary numbers to pass it, based on the tally at the second reading (see Table 9-6). As Reid (2018) noted, however, the Bill did not proceed to final reading under the National-led Government that had introduced it; it was left to the next government that would emerge after the 2017 election. Interviews and other sources suggest that the upcoming election contributed to this deferral.

9.4.7 The government “would not die in the ditch” for the Bill

Participant Tahī believed that the government would have proceeded with the Bill had it not ultimately become “politically untenable” to enact. With the 2017 general election approaching, warnings from within local government indicated that pushing the Bill through without regard for their concerns could have political ramifications, particularly a loss of electoral support. As one local elected official stated in the media, “This will be political

⁹ A minority view is a statement by select committee members setting out their dissent from the committee’s majority recommendations.

suicide for the National Government if [the Bill] goes through. If they turn against us in this way, then we'll turn against them" (McKay, 2016). Local government appeared poised to channel its resistance into the polls, given the high stakes of the 2017 general election. Some considered that this election was the most significant challenge for local government since the abolition of provincial governments in 1876, with the very nature of local government and local democracy on the line (Reid and Macaulay, 2016).

The Bill's contentious nature made it clear that even with amendments, its passage could harm the National-led Government's re-election prospects. Amidst the intense opposition from local government, negative media publicity, criticism from other political parties, and a perception of a divided government, the then Prime Minister John Key signalled that the government had softened its stance on the Bill, stating that the government "would not die in the ditch" for it (Small, 2016b). As Participant Toru observed, "I think the Government felt it didn't have New Zealand on its side with this Bill. And that was a big driver of why things went down the way they went down."

9.4.8 The succeeding Labour-led Government overhauled the Bill.

The transition from a National-led Government to a Labour-led Government following the 2017 general election marked another significant turning point for LGNZ's lobbying on the Bill. Reid (2018, p. 4) described the shift in government as local government having "dodged an existential bullet." While Reid and Macaulay (2018) noted that the two major political parties had not campaigned on specific local government policies, their historical preferences signalled differing visions for local government's role. The same authors described the election as a choice between councils functioning as a governing body for towns and cities or councils being reduced to service providers with limited capacity to act in the interests of their communities.

Participant Rua described Labour-led Governments as "more sympathetic to community views, more sympathetic to diversity...and more sympathetic to local democracy." In terms of process, they noted that Labour-led governments tend to emphasise "engagement and consultation." Participant Toru specifically described the incoming Labour-led Government of 2017 as "more about partnership and participation, and councils knowing their communities."

By contrast, recent National-led governments had been characterised as being more focused on councils delivering their “core jobs well.”

The incoming government’s broader policy was aligned more closely with LGNZ’s advocacy, and this could explain the more collaborative relationship that reportedly existed between the two. For example, as demonstrated by the government’s commitment to engaging with LGNZ on key issues, it made a deliberate effort to work with local government. The newly appointed Labour Minister of Local Government Nanaia Mahuta overhauled the Bill through a Supplementary Order Paper (SOP) to demonstrate the government’s “partnership approach to working with the local government sector” (Mahuta, 2019).

In keeping with Minister Mahuta’s expressed intent to build “a truly collaborative relationship between central and local government,” officials engaged with LGNZ and SOLGM while considering options for the SOP (DIA, 2019, p. 5). They committed to continue working with both associations as further changes to the local government system were contemplated, recognising such an approach offered advantages that included achieving the Government’s policy objectives more efficiently, with greater and more enduring impact, while also reducing the risk of regulatory failure.

The Labour-led Government aimed to reverse its predecessor’s policies on local government (Reid, 2018). Concerning the Bill, Minister Mahuta (2019) underscored the differences between this new government’s policy stances and those of its predecessor, asserting that council assets should not be treated as business propositions and should remain publicly owned and controlled. The government ultimately removed provisions of the Bill that LGNZ opposed; this was seen as a significant achievement of LGNZ’s advocacy. Participant Tahī remarked, “The change of government helped LGNZ’s position. ...it was effectively the Labour-led Government that really dropped [the Bill] as a policy.”

9.4.8.1 Central government will be central government

Despite the more favourable policy outcomes LGNZ achieved on the Bill under the Labour-led Government, interviewees shared the view that governments typically prioritise their own policy agendas over local government perspectives: this was seen as a broader pattern

transcending political differences. Participant Toru attributed this central government tendency to the realities of parliamentary sovereignty, saying in essence that the government does what government wants, “regardless of whether it’s National or Labour-led.” Similarly, Participant Tahi commented that “[pressing ahead with its policy agenda] is just central government being central government.” Examples such as the 1989 local government restructure and the recent Three Waters reform programme—both introduced by Labour-led Governments—were cited as provoking strong opposition from local government. Using the example of the 2008 National-led Government’s efforts to undo the local government reforms of the preceding Labour-led Government, Participant Toru stated that the policy reversals in the Bill may have had more to do with the “ping-pong” dynamic between the two major parties and less to do with what local government wanted. Participant Tahi suggested that, concerning the Bill, LGNZ’s success may simply have been achieved because “what LGNZ wanted was aligned with what the incoming government wanted to do.”

9.5 Discussion

9.5.1 LGNZ’s lobbying strategies and channels

Several factors contributed to LGNZ’s lobbying success on the Bill. The association worked closely with its members to consolidate its position and show a united front against certain provisions of the Bill. Another key aspect of their strategy was their vocal opposition and the use of media as an outlet. Support from elected mayors, chairs, and councillors further increased the media’s coverage of the Bill; media coverage predominantly highlighted perspectives favourable to local government while drawing critical attention to the government’s position. This media presence amplified LGNZ’s message and placed additional pressure on the government, particularly the Minister of Local Government, to address local government concerns.

The succession of Ministers of Local Government during the Bill’s development highlighted how factors such as ministerial views, preferences, seniority, and relationships with local government can influence legislative outcomes. Changes in ministerial leadership resulted in shifts in the level of engagement between officials, the select committee, and LGNZ, ranging from limited consultation to periods of collaboration. When LGNZ was formally enabled to work with officials and engage in the policymaking process, the association’s technical

expertise and use of research and evidence were found to have the most notable impact, resulting in technical amendments to the Bill.

9.5.2 Working with LGNZ was not only about good policy, but also about good politics

The Bill highlighted the political dimensions of LGNZ's lobbying success. As Participant Rua remarked, “[working with LGNZ is] about good policy, but it’s also good politics.” They pointed out that engaging LGNZ early into the policymaking process not only provides valuable policy input but also helps mitigate the risk of backlash from local authorities which often arises from poorly communicated policies. LGNZ and local government’s vocal opposition to the Bill, driven in part by the lack of consultation that preceded the introduction of the Bill, attracted significant media attention. The approaching 2017 general election amplified the impact of the negative publicity directed at the government. According to Participant Toru, as the election drew nearer, the government became more conciliatory toward local government to ease the criticism surrounding the legislation.

This case study of the Bill also underscored the impact LGNZ’s lobbying of other political parties had on the weakening of the government’s position. By persuading support parties that the Bill was not in their best interests, LGNZ successfully created divisions within the government. News accounts suggested that the Minister’s decision to extend the select committee process followed shortly after United Future had publicly withdrawn its support for the Bill. Although no statements were found explaining the Māori Party’s decision, they ultimately voted against the Bill at second reading.

The subsequent change in government further contributed to LGNZ’s success, as the incoming government exhibited greater alignment with LGNZ’s policy position and ultimately removed a number of the most contentious provisions from the Bill. Notably, the outcome of the Bill—with a positive result for LGNZ under a Labour-led Government—contrasts with quantitative findings that associate LGNZ’s lobbying success more strongly with centre-right Governments. Overall, party ideology has not been found in this thesis to be a consistent determinant of LGNZ’s effectiveness. While there is a common perception that centre-left Governments tend to be more sympathetic to local government, interviewees also highlighted instances in which

Labour-led administrations have come into conflict with local authorities while advancing their own policy agendas.

9.5.3 Outsider lobbying tactics

Previous chapters have presented LGNZ as primarily an insider lobbyist, with the statistical analysis focusing mainly on its activities within formal policymaking processes. However, the case study highlights the crucial role outsider tactics—particularly media and publicity campaigns—played in LGNZ’s lobbying success. Similar to the findings of De Bruycker and Beyers (2019), the qualitative data presented here indicates that neither insider nor outsider tactics are inherently more effective. In the case of the Bill, the success of LGNZ’s insider tactics were dependent on its use of outsider tactics. Faced with a National-led Government that was less receptive to local government perspectives, LGNZ adopted a confrontational approach to its lobbying on the Bill, leveraging media campaigns to vocalise its opposition. This approach facilitated LGNZ’s involvement in the policymaking process, as reflected in the extension of the select committee process and the directive for DIA officials to engage with local government, enabling the association to apply its standard insider tactics.

9.5.4 Factors working together

The qualitative findings show that several factors contributed to LGNZ’s lobbying success during the legislative process surrounding the Bill, with each factor closely intertwined with others. Explaining one aspect of LGNZ’s success inevitably invariably acknowledged its relationship with others. External factors such as media coverage, public opinion, and the impending election played necessary roles that alone were not sufficient to shape the Bill’s outcome; instead, they complemented formal lobbying channels and strategies in driving changes to the Bill.

9.6 Moving forward

This chapter has built on the statistical associations demonstrated in Chapter Eight by examining the factors that specifically influenced LGNZ’s lobbying outcomes on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2. Through thematic analysis of interviews conducted and documentary evidence reviewed in this qualitative phase, this chapter has detailed LGNZ’s strategic lobbying efforts and identified key factors such as LGNZ’s effective framing of discussions, mobilisation of councils, media campaigns, and direct engagement with

officials and decision-makers. It has also explored the impact of ministerial changes, the challenges ministers faced in implementing the reform, and the select committee's role in shaping the Bill. Ultimately, LGNZ's lobbying led to concessions from the National-led Government and eventually the Bill's overhaul by the succeeding Labour-led Government. Underscoring LGNZ's lobbying success, this chapter has highlighted the significance of the political landscape and the use of both insider and outsider tactics in achieving favourable outcomes.

This chapter has deepened the analysis of LGNZ's lobbying success by tracing the mechanisms and narratives at play within the 2016 Bill. These qualitative findings largely complement the statistical patterns identified in Chapter Eight, but their full significance emerges when both strands are considered together. This integration is undertaken in Chapter Ten, with Table 10-1 presenting a joint display of the quantitative and qualitative results. As the culmination of the mixed-methods approach, this synthesis provides a robust and nuanced account of LGNZ's influence on national policy.

Overall lessons from LGNZ's lobbying efforts

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has analysed LGNZ's lobbying activities and outcomes to understand the extent to and ways in which a local government association can influence national policy. Seeking to develop a more systematic understanding of LGNZ's lobbying success within the formal legislative process, this thesis had three research objectives: (1) to assess its overall lobbying outcomes, (2) to identify factors associated with success, and (3) to examine how the identified relationships between success and its factors can be observed in a specific legislative case.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were combined in a sequential explanatory design to achieve these three objectives. The statistical analysis provided a generalisable view of LGNZ's lobbying success and the factors associated with it, and the case study elaborated on these statistical associations by analysing actors' perspectives documentary evidence relevant to a particular policymaking process and outcome. The sequencing of the quantitative and qualitative phases allowed the case study to build on the focus provided by the statistical identification of key factors and to offer real-world context and nuanced explanations for the statistical patterns observed. This chapter represents the final step in the sequential explanatory design: the integration of findings from both phases.

10.1.1 Chapter organisation

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 10.2 revisits each phase to support their synthesis into the overall findings. Section 10.3 discusses the overall findings by examining the three possible outcomes of integrating the qualitative and quantitative results within a sequential explanatory design: discordance, confirmation, and expansion (Fetters et al., 2013). Section 10.4 examines the implications of these findings for LGNZ as a lobbying group, for New Zealand's policymaking process and central and local government relations, and for the broader interest group literature. Section 10.5 considers the limitations of this study and offers recommendations for future research. Section 10.6 concludes this thesis.

10.2 Summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings

10.2.1 Addressing research objectives 1 and 2

This thesis aimed, first, to assess LGNZ's overall lobbying outcomes and, second, to identify the factors associated with the association's success across multiple legislative cases. The hypotheses concerning LGNZ's lobbying success and its factors were developed based on insights from Chapters Two to Seven. Chapter Two reviewed the interest group literature, identifying three key factors that influence lobbying success—organisational, institutional, and issue-based. These categories formed the basis for developing hypotheses about LGNZ's lobbying success. Chapter Three applied this three-factor framework to the study of local government lobbying and highlighted gaps in the existing literature. Chapters Four through Seven further refined these factors by examining their applicability to New Zealand's policymaking process, central and local government relations, and LGNZ's role as an interest group.

In the quantitative analysis presented in Chapter Eight, LGNZ's lobbying success and hypothesised factors were examined using content and statistical methods. The quantitative findings indicate that LGNZ achieved favourable legislative outcomes for local government on more than half of the 453 policy issues examined (56.7%), including instances where it fully supported government proposals, as was shown in Figure 8-3. When LGNZ actively sought change, Figure 8-2 showed the association achieved at least partial success on almost half of technical amendments (48.67%) and on more than a third of issues involving substantive opposition to government policy intent (35.8–38.7%). Overall, these findings suggest a moderate degree of influence by LGNZ over national policymaking. LGNZ's success was statistically associated with a range of factors, including the presence of a centre-right government, endorsement of the association's position by coalition and support parties, government officials, and select committees, and strong support from local authorities. Success was also more likely where LGNZ focused on technical rather than substantive policy changes and where its arguments were supported by evidence.

10.2.2 Addressing research objective 3

The third aim of this thesis was to examine how the statistical relationships identified in the earlier analysis could be observed in a specific legislative case. Chapter Nine addressed this

objective by analysing the factors that shaped LGNZ's lobbying outcomes in the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill No. 2 (the Bill). Applying thematic analysis to interviews and documentary evidence, the chapter outlined LGNZ's strategic efforts around the Bill, including the framing of debates, mobilisation of councils, media campaigns, and direct engagement with officials and decision-makers. It also examined the impact of different Ministers of Local Government, the political contexts in which they implemented reforms, and the role the select committee played in shaping the Bill. The analysis showed that LGNZ's lobbying contributed to concessions made by the National-led Government and, ultimately, to a substantially revised version of the Bill under the subsequent Labour-led Government.

10.2.3 Initial implications of the findings

The quantitative analysis focused on how LGNZ's lobbying success was achieved within the formal policy process, identifying statistical associations between that success and factors discussed above. The qualitative analysis highlighted that major legislative change, particularly in the face of government resistance, was attributed to outsider lobbying, external pressure, and political dynamics not seen in official records. Overall, the two analyses suggest that LGNZ, while typically regarded as an insider lobbyist, can draw on the strategic use of both insider and outsider tactics to shape policy outcomes.

10.3 Integrating the findings using a sequential explanatory design

This thesis used a staged approach to integrate the findings, proceeding in distinct phases to guide the reader step-by-step (see Fetters et al., 2013, for other approaches). A joint display was developed to enhance the synthesis (see Table 10-1 below). This visual representation organises findings from both phases side-by-side, grouped by type of factor—institutional, organisational, and issue-based. It helps to identify connections between statistical and case study findings, to facilitate comparisons, and to reveal additional insights that may not be as evident when results are considered separately.

Table 10-1 and the accompanying discussion presents this thesis's evaluation of the fit of integration, which refers to the coherence between the statistical and case study findings (Fetters et al., 2013). This evaluation can result in three possible outcomes—confirmation, discordance, and expansion. Confirmation occurs when the statistical and case study findings align and reinforce each other. Discordance refers to inconsistencies or contradictions

between the two sets of findings. Expansion captures instances where the findings differ but are complementary, offering a broader understanding of LGNZ's lobbying success. As the following subsections discuss, the qualitative findings largely converged with the quantitative results, confirming eight of the ten statistical associations, revealing one point of discordance in relation to the unexpected association between LGNZ's success and centre-right governments, and providing no qualitative evidence to assess the remaining association. The case study also suggested additional complementary factors contributing to LGNZ's lobbying success that were not captured in the statistical analysis.

10.3.1 Confirmation

The case study findings align with eight hypotheses supported by chi-square test results, outlining possible underlying mechanisms linking LGNZ's lobbying outcomes to the factors identified quantitatively and offering a more nuanced understanding of these relationships.

10.3.1.1 *Demonstrating strength in numbers*

One area of strong agreement between the statistical and case study findings was the importance of collective action by LGNZ's members. The statistical analysis indicated that LGNZ's lobbying efforts were more successful when a high volume of submissions from local authorities were made in response to the proposed legislation. This finding was used as an indicator of the importance of strength in numbers to LGNZ's lobbying. The case study demonstrated how the association's lobbying was bolstered by members' cohesive opposition to the Bill, expressed through coordinated actions at various stages of and extending beyond the formal policymaking process.

Qualitative evidence shows that the majority of LGNZ members voted to oppose legislative measures perceived as undermining community and council involvement in managing local infrastructure, indicating that local authorities demonstrated unified opposition to the Bill early on. This strong collective stance highlighted the significant concerns held by local authorities and provided LGNZ with a solid platform from which to advocate for their interests. The association was able to organise extensive lobbying efforts focused on showcasing this strength in numbers, such as encouraging local authorities to write to and appear before the select committee to ensure the committee was aware of the widespread concerns councils had regarding the proposed changes in the Bill. Additionally, LGNZ ran a

broad media campaign, with its members approaching local newspapers to amplify local government concerns about the Bill, raise public awareness, and exert pressure on the government.

By presenting a united front in this way, LGNZ signalled to policymakers that the association's opposition to the Bill represented a broad consensus across local government rather than just a subset. In transcripts of the parliamentary debates, Members of Parliament (MPs) deliberating on the Bill frequently cited LGNZ's strong opposition to it. The Minister of Local Government may also have realised how extensive and solid the resistance was following an unsuccessful attempt to sideline LGNZ by directly engaging with individual councils. Ultimately, the National-led Government decided to extend the select committee process for the Bill, stating that doing this would provide an opportunity for more substantial input from local government. The sources contributing to the case study presented multiple pieces of evidence suggesting that the pressure from LGNZ and its members contributed to this decision.

10.3.1.2 Lobbying support parties

Another area of confirmation between the two findings was around LGNZ's engagement with support and coalition parties. The statistical analysis associated LGNZ's lobbying success with securing the backing of these parties in the MMP environment. The case study described how LGNZ's targeted lobbying of United Future and the Māori Party, in opposition to the Bill, appeared to influence coalition dynamics, contributing to a more conciliatory stance by the National-led Government toward LGNZ's concerns.

United Future's public withdrawal of its support coincided with substantial opposition from local government. In its announcement, United Future reflected some of the concerns of the sector, including the need for council agreement in reorganisation efforts and greater transparency in the Local Government Commission's investigations. News reports indicate that United Future's action contributed to delays and prompted reconsideration of the Bill. The Māori Party also distanced itself from the Bill, further signalling a divergence among the government's support parties. This loss of backing weakened the government's majority, leaving it more exposed to challenges from both the opposition parties and local authorities.

10.3.1.3 Testifying before the select committee and presenting evidence

Both sets of findings underscored the significance of LGNZ's direct engagement with the select committee to its lobbying success. The statistical analysis demonstrated that testifying before the committee and presenting evidence were associated with a higher likelihood of securing favourable legislative amendments. The case study enriched this finding by shedding light on LGNZ's strategic approach to the select committee process, which included conducting thorough research, enlisting effective representation, collaborating with officials, and strategically timing their presentation. Interviewees also highlighted LGNZ's role as a credible and independent advisor to the government.

LGNZ strategically positioned itself as the final presenter during the select committee hearings on the Bill, enabling it to influence discussions and emphasise the united opposition to the Bill's contentious provisions. The association dedicated significant resources to crafting detailed submissions and ensuring that politically astute representatives delivered its presentations effectively present persuasive arguments that would resonate with committee members. Interviewees acknowledged LGNZ generally as a strong lobbying group at the select committee stage but noted that the association's strength could be limited in other cases by the select committee's alignment with the government.

The select committee process provided LGNZ a platform to voice local government concerns and present actionable recommendations to decision-makers and the public. This process also facilitated constructive collaboration with officials, particularly following a change in minister that fostered a more cooperative relationship. Officials acknowledged that many of the adjustments recommended to and adopted by the select committee were informed by LGNZ's contributions. Interview data suggests that LGNZ's involvement not only influenced the legislative outcomes but also enhanced the overall quality of policymaking.

10.3.1.4 Officials and select committee

The statistical findings highlighted a strong alignment between the advice of officials, select committee recommendations, and legislative outcomes. These findings indicated that LGNZ's success at the select committee stage was associated with the administering agency's advice, while outcomes in the final legislation were linked to select committee recommendations.

While the case study confirmed that LGNZ could indeed influence changes in the select committee stage, it also showed that the committee's alignment with the broader policy objectives of the government determined the extent of substantive change achievable through this process.

Interviewees generally noted that select committees with a government majority often adopt the advice of officials, reflecting the tendency of committee reports to follow the government's policy agenda. This observation supports the statistical association between agency positions and select committee outcomes. The interviewees also indicated that, while DIA officials collaborated with LGNZ on the Bill, their primary responsibility was to the Minister of Local Government, so they focused on refining technical details rather than revisiting policy intent.

10.3.1.5 Lobbying for technical changes

Both the statistical and case study findings confirm that LGNZ achieved greater success when its lobbying efforts aligned with the government's policy intent, particularly when these efforts were focused on proposing smaller technical or administrative changes. In contrast, when LGNZ sought major changes that diverged from the government's policy intent, the likelihood of success dropped considerably, a pattern further illustrated by the case study as it unfolded across different political contexts.

Under the National-led Government, LGNZ's lobbying on the Bill was initially constrained by the broader policy direction the government sought to pursue in local government. This is partly explained by the reality that the formal machinery of policymaking, in which administrative agencies and select committees operate largely within the bounds of the government's agenda, limits the ability of any lobbying group to re-litigate the fundamental purpose of legislation. The statistical analysis provided some evidence of this pattern, showing a strong correlation between departmental reports, select committee recommendations, and lobbying success. Case study interviews further explained the convention in which administering agencies prioritise the achievement of the ministers' policy objectives and collaborate with groups like LGNZ primarily to refine technical details rather than revisit policy intent. Similarly, select committees with a government majority typically

align with the government, making it unlikely that they will endorse substantive amendments that challenge fundamental policy goals.

However, the case study also showed that the political context surrounding the Bill was not static. The prospect of a looming election, combined with an active campaign from LGNZ and councils against the Bill, created a more receptive environment for LGNZ's position even before the change in government. Following the transition from a National-led to a Labour-led Government, the contested provisions were ultimately dropped, with interview evidence suggesting that the dropping of these provisions reflected a closer alignment between LGNZ's position and the new government's policy priorities.

10.3.2 Discordance

Only one area of discordance emerged between the statistical and case study findings: the relationship between government ideology and LGNZ's lobbying success.

10.3.2.1 *Government ideology*

The combined findings from the statistical analysis and case study reveal that government ideology does not consistently determine lobbying success. The statistical analysis found that LGNZ is more likely to achieve favourable changes under centre-right governments, a somewhat unexpected finding given the initial hypothesis that centre-left governments would be more ideologically favourable toward local government interests. However, the case study presented contradictory evidence. The Bill formed part of a broader programme of local government reforms introduced by the 2008–2017 National-led Government. These reforms emphasised economic efficiency and a more focused definition of local government's core functions, while reversing measures introduced by the previous Labour-led Government that were seen as strengthening councils' roles as partners of central government and promoting local autonomy and democracy.

Offering an alternative explanation to the statistical findings, the case study suggested that the timing and stage of LGNZ's involvement could play a bigger role in lobbying success than government ideology. While the statistical analysis identified a positive association between centre-right governments and legislative changes favourable to local government, the case study challenges this pattern by showing that the National-led Government excluded LGNZ

from the early stages of policy development. Drage (2016, p. 18) suggests this reflects a broader trend with centre-right governments, which often prefer a “command-and-control bureaucratic model” when dealing with local government. As a result, LGNZ had to lobby intensively to be included, and its input was considered only later in the legislative process. If LGNZ had been consulted earlier in policy development, fewer changes might be observed during the legislative process, as the association’s input would have already been integrated. The statistical analysis did not capture this timing aspect, as it only focused on LGNZ’s lobbying actions taken during the formal legislative process.

The more substantive successes LGNZ experienced under the Labour-led Government were attributed by some interviewees to the alignment between its views and the government’s position on the Bill, rather than to LGNZ’s lobbying efforts. Interviewees also noted a history of policy reversals between the two major parties and generally suggested that governments tend to prioritise their own policy agendas over local government positions, regardless of which party is in power.

Reflecting on these findings suggests that assessing influence through the first face of power—particularly observable policy outcomes and formal stages of policymaking—remains a meaningful approach but captures only part of the picture. Factors such as consultation stage, political timing, and party dynamics, which interest groups can respond to but not fully control, can shape outcomes in ways that are not evident in official documents. By combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, this thesis captures some of these subtler dynamics to provide a more nuanced understanding of LGNZ’s influence.

10.3.3 Expansion

Case study findings expanded this thesis’s understanding of LGNZ’s lobbying success by showing three important factors that had not been captured quantitatively. Two of these factors underscore LGNZ’s use of outsider tactics and their significance in the association’s lobbying efforts. These factors emerged from interviews and, as such, were not tested across different pieces of legislation.

10.3.3.1 Framing the Bill

LGNZ's strategic framing of the Bill as a threat to local democracy played a central role in shaping its lobbying success. By highlighting the Bill's potential to increase centralised control and constrain local authority over council assets, LGNZ tapped into the core values of councils and mayors and fostered alignment across local government actors. This alignment translated into coordinated public criticism of the legislation; the widespread opposition amplified LGNZ's leverage. LGNZ's emphasis on local democratic principles created a counter-narrative to the government's focus on economic efficiency, illustrating how the same policy can be seen as beneficial or harmful depending on the values through which it is assessed, and how these interpretations can ultimately shape legislative outcomes. The case study illustrates how framing can serve as a mechanism through which an advocacy organisation consolidates stakeholder support and exerts pressure on policymakers.

By highlighting the potential electoral risks of advancing the Bill without addressing local government concerns, LGNZ's framing exerted significant political pressure on the government, particularly in the lead-up to the 2017 general election. This framing also provided opposition parties with a credible platform from which to challenge the government. The combination of LGNZ's targeted lobbying and the perceived risk that the coalition government could lose power because of its position on the Bill contributed to the erosion of support among key political allies, which weakened the government's position and altered the political dynamics surrounding the Bill.

Overall, controlling the narrative around the Bill emerged as a cornerstone of LGNZ's lobbying strategy in the case study. This approach not only mobilised its members but also influenced political parties and drew media attention to LGNZ's messaging, ultimately generating political pressure that steered the legislative process in its favour. In Chapter Eight, the link between narrative framing, based on LGNZ's policy agenda, and lobbying success (see Hypothesis 14) was grounded in existing knowledge of central and local government relations and focused primarily on actors directly involved in the policymaking process. However, the case study demonstrated how LGNZ also leveraged this approach to shaping public opinion as part of a broader lobbying strategy.

10.3.3.2 Media

Another area in which the synthesis of findings resulted in expansion was LGNZ's use of media and publicity campaigns, which extended the understanding of its lobbying strategies beyond the formal legislative process. While the statistical analysis concentrated on investigating the relationship between LGNZ's use of insider tactics and lobbying success—guided by insights from earlier chapters on local government lobbying, New Zealand's policymaking process, and data availability—the case study highlighted the significance of outsider tactics. In the case of the Bill, LGNZ launched a comprehensive media campaign to highlight its concerns. This generated a series of articles and editorials critiquing the proposed changes and advocating for community involvement in the management of local assets. Minister Lotu-liga's subsequent efforts to shape media discourse can be seen as indicative of the impact LGNZ's campaign had on the public and political debate. During the select committee stage, LGNZ amplified its efforts by strategically drawing media attention to its presentation. The association ensured that mayors and regional chairs were publicly featured voicing their dissent, demonstrating the breadth of local government opposition.

10.3.3.3 Minister of Local Government

Another important factor that was not assessed through statistical analysis was the impact of different Ministers of Local Government on LGNZ's lobbying efforts. The case study illustrated how differences in the personality, political experience, Cabinet influence, priorities, and approach of each Minister shaped their interactions with LGNZ and their responsiveness to local government concerns. Dialogue with LGNZ was limited under Minister Bennett, who maintained a strong focus on economic efficiency and structural reform. By contrast, interviewees perceived Minister Tolley's experience and engagement with local government as facilitating a more collaborative relationship, creating greater opportunities for LGNZ's perspectives on the Bill to be considered. Between these two tenures, Minister Lotu-liga inherited the reform programme but struggled to advance it amid sustained opposition from the local government sector.

Table 10-1 Joint display of the quantitative and qualitative findings

Factor	Statistical Findings	Case Study Findings	Fit of Integration
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS			
Government Ideology	LGNZ had a higher likelihood of obtaining favourable changes in legislation when a centre-right Government was in power.	After LGNZ's vocal opposition and lobbying, the National-led Government softened its stance and asked officials and the select committee to work with LGNZ, leading to technical changes to the Bill. Post-election policy reversals were driven more by the existing alignment between LGNZ and the Labour Party and political manoeuvring between the two major parties than by local government lobbying. While Labour-led Governments are generally seen as more consultative and sympathetic to local government, this is not a universal rule, as LGNZ has opposed some of their policies in the past. Regardless of the ruling party, the government tends to prioritise its policy agenda over local government views.	Discordance: Government ideology appeared not to be a consistent factor in LGNZ's lobbying success, although some parties may tend to align or work more closely with local government. The case study offers an alternative explanation for the statistical association found, suggesting the likelihood of obtaining favourable changes to legislation could be more about the timing of LGNZ's involvement rather than ideology. As shown, LGNZ obtained favourable changes in the later stages of the Bill. Had they been involved earlier, during policy development, fewer concessions might have been observed in the legislative phase, since their inputs would have already been considered before the first reading. As noted in Chapter Six, the statistical analysis focused on the legislative process due to data limitations.
Minister of Local Government	Not captured quantitatively.	Successive Ministers of Local Government played a crucial role in determining the Bill's final form. The level of interaction between LGNZ, DIA officials, and the select committee fluctuated from minimal consultation to a more cooperative approach with changes in ministerial leadership. The experience, personal preferences, and policy stances of successive Ministers of Local Government shaped their interactions with LGNZ, which in turn	Expansion: The case study demonstrated how the Minister of Local Government could impact LGNZ's lobbying outcomes through the role that the minister plays in the policymaking process and their engagement with certain groups—an important finding not captured in the statistical analysis.

Factor	Statistical Findings	Case Study Findings	Fit of Integration
		influenced the association's capacity to impact national policies on local government.	
Lobbying coalition or support parties	Favourable changes in the legislation are more likely to occur with the backing of a coalition or support party.	LGNZ effectively lobbied support parties of the National-led Government and convinced them that the Bill was not in their best interests. This strategy led these parties to withdraw their support for it, creating divisions within the government and weakening its position. LGNZ also engaged with opposition parties, providing them with arguments against the government's stance on the Bill. Doing this helped amplify the pushback narrative that placed pressure on the government.	Confirmation: The statistical finding suggests that LGNZ is more likely to achieve favourable legislative changes when they have the backing of coalition or support parties. The case study demonstrated this finding in action: LGNZ's strategic targeting of support parties in the National-led Government convinced them to withdraw their backing for the Bill. This weakened the government's ability to push the legislation forward.
Officials and Select Committee	Success at the select committee level is dependent on the position of the administering agency. Success in the final legislation is dependent on the recommendation of the select committee.	Findings indicated that the select committee is not fully independent from Government policies, as the decisions of this committee, under National-led and Labour-led Governments, were often informed by advice from officials. While DIA officials sought to maintain a collaborative relationship with LGNZ, their primary responsibility was to achieve the policy objectives of the given Minister of Local Government. Under the National-led Government, the select committee had a government majority and recommended changes to the Bill that partially addressed LGNZ's concerns without significantly altering the policy intent behind the provisions.	Confirmation: The case study provided insight into the strong statistical association between officials' advice and select committee recommendations, in terms of their shared need to work within the government's policy agenda. It also demonstrated that changes could occur during the select committee stage and offered a more nuanced understanding of the type of changes achievable through this process.

Factor	Statistical Findings	Case Study Findings	Fit of Integration
ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS			
Framing the Bill as undermining local democracy	Not captured quantitatively.	LGNZ framed the Bill in terms of its negative implications for local democracy, highlighting increased centralised control and interference with local assets. This framing appealed to the core values of local authorities and fostered a united front of councils and mayors publicly condemning the Bill. LGNZ's emphasis on local democracy sharply contrasted with the government's focus on economic efficiency, and this contrast gained substantial public attention. The narrative heightened political pressure on the Government, especially as the 2017 general election approached, raising concerns about electoral consequences.	Expansion: The case study underscored how LGNZ extended its lobbying efforts beyond engaging officials and policymakers to influencing public opinion and leveraging political dynamics.
Demonstrating strength in numbers	LGNZ tends to achieve greater success with legislation that receives a higher number of submissions from local authorities.	Strength in numbers had a significant effect on positive outcomes for LGNZ in the Bill. Local authorities rallied against it, starting with a decisive vote at the LGNZ conference to oppose perceived threats to local democracy and autonomy. Their solidarity resisted Minister Lotu-liga's attempt to divide and conquer. The unity of councils against the Bill was evident through various lobbying actions: council submissions aligning with LGNZ's stance, local government leaders attending select committee hearings to show support, collective lobbying efforts, and proactive media	Confirmation: The case study findings supported the statistical findings by illustrating how the solidarity and collective action of local authorities contributed to LGNZ's lobbying success.

Factor	Statistical Findings	Case Study Findings	Fit of Integration
		engagement. These actions drew significant media attention, amplified pressure on the Government, and achieved success for the association.	
Actioning media and publicity campaign	Not captured quantitatively.	LGNZ launched a broad media campaign spotlighting local government concerns with the provisions of the Bill. The campaign resulted in articles and editorials criticising these policies and advocating for community involvement in the management of local assets. Central to this success was LGNZ's framing of the issue being a fight for local democracy, which helped unify local government opposition. The approaching 2017 general election added pressure on the Government, in terms of the political ramifications of pushing the Bill through without addressing local government concerns.	Expansion: Previous chapters examined LGNZ primarily as an insider lobbyist, with the statistical analysis centred on formal policymaking processes. However, the case study underscores the importance of outsider tactics such as media and publicity campaigns in LGNZ's lobbying success.
Testifying before the select committee and presenting evidence	LGNZ is more likely to win changes in legislation by testifying before the select committee. Presentation of expert evidence is associated with better chances of achieving favourable changes.	Officials acknowledged that many of the changes recommended to the select committee were shaped through collaboration with LGNZ. Interviewees suggest the policymaking improved when LGNZ became involved. LGNZ was described as an independent advisor producing information that officials may lack. LGNZ strategically positioned itself as the final presenter in select committee hearings on the Bill, bookending the other submissions from SOLGM and local government. As reflected in recognition by successive Ministers of Local Government and the select committee of its policy and technical expertise, LGNZ was able to shape	Confirmation: The case study insights deepen the understanding of the statistical associations by illustrating how and why these tactics work. Additionally, the qualitative findings add consideration of context to the interpretation of the quantitative findings by showing how factors like committee alignment with the government can limit LGNZ's success, even when the association uses these tactics.

Factor	Statistical Findings	Case Study Findings	Fit of Integration
		the legislation through their involvement in the select committee process. While LGNZ was demonstrated to be effective at convincing select committee members, their impact could be constrained by a committee's alignment with the government.	
ISSUE-BASED FACTORS			
LGNZ position and policy change sought	Lobbying within the Government's policy intent has a better likelihood of success. Smaller changes tend to have better lobbying outcomes.	Under the National-led Government, LGNZ secured some technical and administrative changes to the Bill, but the policy intent of the provisions it opposed remained largely unchanged. The government continued to pursue its policy agenda. The subsequent Labour-led Government eventually dropped these contested provisions, partly due to the alignment between LGNZ's and the party's policy stance.	Confirmation: The case study showed how LGNZ's impact could be constrained by the broader policy direction the government wanted to pursue. Under the National-led Government, LGNZ's efforts resulted in technical and administrative changes, given fundamental policy differences. This indicates that lobbying outside the Government's policy direction could be more challenging. In contrast, when the Labour-led Government aligned more closely with LGNZ's stance, contested provisions were dropped.

10.3.4 Limitations to integration

Chapter Nine's focus on a single case study of the 2016 Bill introduced certain limitations that warrant consideration. First, the qualitative analysis provided supporting evidence for most of the statistical associations identified but could not examine how LGNZ's support for government policy positions, and its justification of that support, contributed to favourable legislative outcomes. The quantitative analysis in Chapter Eight identified a positive association between LGNZ's justification of supportive positions and lobbying success, indicating that policy issues where LGNZ articulated the positive effects of a proposal for local government were statistically more likely to be enacted. This limitation largely reflects the contentious nature of the case study, as the 2016 Bill required LGNZ to primarily adopt oppositional and defensive framing, leaving limited opportunities to observe how justification of support to a government proposal may affect legislative outcomes.

Second, the case study was unable to further explore factors that were found to lack statistically significant associations with LGNZ's lobbying success. It did not yield qualitative evidence to explain why variables—such as the structural strength of government, the impact of individual LGNZ National Presidents, and issue-based local government principles including funding and local democracy—were identified by chi-square tests as statistically insignificant. As a result, the analysis provides no insight into whether these factors may nevertheless exert subtle or indirect effects on LGNZ's lobbying outcomes.

10.4 Implications of the research findings

10.4.1 On LGNZ as the national advocate for local authorities

10.4.1.1 Assessment of LGNZ's overall lobbying success

When observed through the alignment between its policy preferences and final legislative outcomes, LGNZ has demonstrated moderate capacity to influence national policies. Documentary evidence indicates linkages between LGNZ's lobbying inputs and legislative

outputs, with officials from administering agencies often responding to the technical and policy issues raised in LGNZ's written submissions. The association's positions were incorporated into select committee recommendations and then into the final legislation. This capacity was determined to be contingent on political context, institutional processes, and LGNZ's strategic lobbying. Both the statistical and case study analyses indicate a relationship between legislative changes and LGNZ lobbying activities including collective action, engagement with political actors, issue framing, and the use of media to shape public and policymaker perceptions.

10.4.1.2 Improving the chances of lobbying success

Both phases of this thesis demonstrated that LGNZ experienced both successes and setbacks across the policy issues examined. The statistical comparison of lobbying wins and losses identified strategies and conditions associated with a higher likelihood of success. The case study analysis added depth to these findings by illustrating how some of these relationships unfolded within a specific legislative process. Not only did the case study offer insight into possible mechanisms underlying the observed statistical patterns; it also pointed to additional factors although these may need further examination across a broader set of cases. Taken together, the findings point to the following ways in which LGNZ may improve its chances of lobbying success.

Participating in formal policymaking processes

Both the statistical and case study findings suggest that participation in formal policy processes remains a cornerstone of LGNZ's lobbying. Combined evidence suggests that participation in consultations, submissions on proposed legislation, and direct engagement with policymakers are some of the ways through which LGNZ can effectively promote the policy interests of local government. However, the findings also indicate limits to the extent of change achievable through these channels. Lobbying efforts that focused on technical or administrative amendments within the government's existing policy agenda were associated with a higher likelihood of success.

That said, opposing government policy decisions did not invariably result in lobbying failure. The data show that LGNZ succeeded in influencing changes to one in three (30 of 93) of the proposed legislative measures it fully opposed, reflecting fundamental policy differences between the association and the government. This figure suggests that, while less probable, lobbying directly against Government policy decisions can still lead to positive outcomes.

Strengthening participation in formal processes

The findings highlight strategies LGNZ has taken to enhance its participation in formal processes, starting with the association's fostering of a united front among local authorities. The case study revealed the lengths to which LGNZ went to coordinate submissions from, encourage select committee attendance by, and facilitate public statements from councils. The resulting demonstrations of solidarity amplified LGNZ's voice and heightened the visibility of local government concerns surrounding the Bill across both public and policymaking arenas. LGNZ built unity among councils by carefully framing issues and ensuring members fully understood the potential implications of the proposed law for local government.

The findings also provide corroborating evidence of the value of LGNZ's technical expertise and its strong relationships with officials and select committee members. Fostering dialogue and participating in consultations within these formal processes allowed LGNZ to bring its insights into the policy process early, which may enhance its influence over legislative outcomes. The findings also validate the importance of crafting well-researched, compelling submissions that clearly articulate LGNZ's policy positions. The association's success is closely linked to the ability to present evidence-based arguments and to position itself strategically as a credible advisor during select committee hearings.

Building relationships with different political actors

The findings underscore the importance to LGNZ of strategic engagement with a diverse range of political actors throughout the legislative process. During its lobbying efforts on the Bill, LGNZ worked with Ministers of Local Government and members of support and opposition parties. Its experiences with successive ministers demonstrated that the quality of the relationship between the minister and local government has a significant influence on the association's ability to advocate effectively for local government interests.

Engagement with support parties emerged as a key lobbying strategy for LGNZ. Statistical findings indicated that endorsement of LGNZ's position from these parties were associated with higher chances of lobbying success. The case study further illustrated that this engagement was particularly useful when direct lobbying of the government proved challenging. LGNZ's interactions with opposition parties also played an essential role in shaping the discourse around policy issues affecting local government. By equipping the opposition with compelling arguments against the government's position on the Bill, local government concerns surrounding it were well-represented in parliamentary debates.

Using outsider lobbying

To lobby against the Bill, LGNZ employed media and publicity campaigns—outsider tactics not commonly associated with local government associations, according to the existing literature. In the contentious case examined, these strategies proved effective in securing access to policymakers. By raising public awareness of local government concerns with the Bill, LGNZ was able to generate political pressure on the Minister of Local Government and the National-led Government, which intensified as the general election approached. This pressure contributed to the extension of the select committee process to allow committee members and officials to engage closely with LGNZ to address these concerns.

10.4.2 On local government associations

Similarities between LGNZ and other local government associations (LGAs) are found in the literature. LGNZ serves as a unified voice for local authorities, advocating for their interests at the national level. This role aligns with the literature's emphasis on the important roles LGAs play in strengthening the position of local governments within intergovernmental relations and in providing a platform for local feedback to reach central government actors. A key factor in LGNZ's lobbying success has been its ability to mobilise local authorities and present a cohesive front—an attribute recognised in the literature as vital for an effective LGA advocacy.

The literature portrays LGAs as primarily relying on insider lobbying tactics. Much of the successes achieved by LGNZ during the timeframe of this study were won through the strategic application of insider lobbying tactics during the formal policymaking process. Policymakers often pay attention to LGNZ because of its recognised technical expertise and the collective strength of its membership—qualities identified in the literature as critical to the effectiveness of LGAs.

However, LGNZ has also been shown to incorporate outsider tactics—specifically, media campaigns and the public framing of issues in the case of the Bill—into its lobbying approach. LGNZ's dual approach of integrating insider and outsider strategies highlights a less-studied practice in local government advocacy, challenging the traditional portrayal of LGAs as solely insider lobbyists. The findings bring to light an understudied aspect of LGAs, suggesting a need for further investigation into their use of outsider tactics and the impact these have on their overall lobbying success.

10.4.3 On the broader interest group literature

10.4.3.1 Combinations of factors lead to lobbying success

The case study findings demonstrate that lobbying success can result from the interplay of multiple factors. For example, LGNZ's framing of the Bill resonated strongly with local

authorities, whose demonstrations of collective opposition garnered media and public attention and generated increasing political pressure on the government. The multiparty dynamics within the coalition government led LGNZ to be formally accommodated in the policymaking process, where they ultimately achieved favourable changes for local government.

In the broader literature on interest groups, some exploration of these interactions exists, but it remains an under-researched area. Previous studies have often compartmentalised the study of interest group influence in terms of institutional, organisational, or issue-based factors, neglecting how these factors might interact to shape lobbying outcomes. The findings from LGNZ's case highlight the importance of understanding these interactions and how they create either supportive or challenging environments for lobbying success. This gap in the literature points to a need for future research to systematically investigate the relationships among these factors to better understand their combined effects on influence.

10.4.3.2 Aggregate versus group-specific studies

Much of the influence literature examines lobbying outcomes by categorising organisations into broad interest types (e.g., business vs. public interest) to determine which is more influential and under what conditions. While this approach has generated important insights into the determinants of interest group influence, the findings of this thesis raise questions about its applicability when examining a specific interest group. Business interests were often found to diminish the success of other lobbyists, particularly public interest groups, with some New Zealand scholars pointing to a tension between business and local government interests in the past. However, this pattern was not supported by the quantitative evidence in the case of LGNZ. The absence of a statistical relationship between the mobilisation of business interests, used as a proxy for opposition to LGNZ's position on a bill (see Hypothesis 16), and lobbying success suggests a need for more systematic research into how aggregate-level findings translate to the analysis of individual interest groups, such as LGNZ.

The statistical analysis also highlighted weaknesses in commonly used indicators for measuring factors of influence. For example, legislation length, often used as a proxy for complexity, was found to correlate with the number of LGNZ's recommendations, which in turn increases the opportunities for lobbying success. As this thesis focuses on a single case, further research is needed to examine how these factors operate for other specific interest groups. A narrower, group-specific approach may offer more practical and actionable insights than broader aggregate-level studies. Relationships observed across broad categories of interest groups may not necessarily operate in the same way for a particular organisation.

10.4.4 On the policymaking process in New Zealand

Although not the primary focus of this thesis, the analysis of LGNZ's influence offers valuable insights into the New Zealand's policymaking process and, as will be discussed in the next section, central–local government relations. The findings demonstrate how an interest group can shape public policy. A comprehensive understanding of how legislation is formulated in New Zealand must therefore account for the positions and activities of interest groups.

The findings also support descriptions of New Zealand's policymaking process outlined in Chapter Four as being information- and process-driven, at least in the context of national policies affecting local government. Every bill examined in the statistical analysis was modified to some extent following public consultation, with many changes reflecting LGNZ's policy preferences. This finding underscores the importance of the submissions and select committee process for lobbying and legislative change. Investigation of LGNZ's lobbying efforts on the Bill corroborated the importance of technical expertise and policy inputs, consistent with the expanded role of interest groups under the MMP electoral system, which has increased policymakers' demand for information and expanded parliamentary access points for lobbying. The case study also demonstrated how LGNZ engaged with smaller support parties to influence the Government's stance on a bill.

Observing LGNZ's role in this process illustrated the ways in which external input can shape policy outcomes.

The findings also shed light on a few controversial aspects of New Zealand's policymaking process. A strong correlation was observed between officials' advice and select committee recommendations, confirming the findings by Dreyer and Ellis (2021) in their study of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill 2019. This correlation raises questions about the independence of a select committee from the minister who approves the departmental report. Another contentious issue, illustrated by variation in engagement with LGNZ depending on who held the local government portfolio, is the significant influence that the minister can exert over policymaking and consultation processes. In addition, the reported impact of the impending election on the Bill's development and outcome raises questions about the extent to which policy decisions are driven by political expediency rather than real public engagement.

10.4.5 On central-local government relations in New Zealand

The findings showcased LGNZ's role in central-local government relations, not only in terms of the association being the national advocate for local authorities but also acting as a potential independent advisor and political sounding board for the government. The strong backlash by councils against the Bill for perceived lack of consultation emphasised the importance to central government of involving local government representatives early in the policymaking process. Such engagement should allow for the collection of valuable policy input and foster a sense of ownership among local authorities over the policies being developed. A more collaborative approach could help mitigate the risk of a proposed legislation receiving negative reactions from local authorities, stemming from poorly communicated policies. As one interviewee noted, having LGNZ involved early in the case of the Bill could have led to more thoughtful and less reactive responses to it, ultimately enhancing the quality of the final legislation and the effectiveness of its implementation.

10.5 Future research

This thesis represents one of the first systematic efforts to examine LGNZ as an interest group within New Zealand's policymaking process. The findings open avenues for further research into how LGNZ navigates political landscapes, engages with key stakeholders, and shapes legislative outcomes at different stages of the policymaking process. By analysing LGNZ's lobbying success, this thesis also lays the groundwork for similar investigations into other local government associations and their influence on public policy.

10.5.1 Future case studies to complement this thesis

10.5.1.1 An investigation of LGNZ's lobbying impact during the policy development phase

This thesis focused primarily on LGNZ's involvement as a lobbying organisation during the formal legislative process, due in part to the availability of official documents and records as data sources. Accordingly, future research could explore LGNZ's role in the earlier, informal stages of policy development, where ideas are shaped among stakeholders and political actors. Particularly suitable for this topic would be a case study approach that employs in-depth qualitative methods to examine how LGNZ influences policy direction before a bill is introduced to Parliament. This research could uncover important insights into how different party ideologies and attitudes shape central government engagement with local government views during the pre-legislative phase. It may also reveal lobbying strategies that differ from those identified in this thesis, providing a more comprehensive understanding of LGNZ's advocacy methods and influence across the entire policy lifecycle.

10.5.1.2 An exploration of the usefulness of media and publicity campaigns

Studying the LGNZ's media and publicity campaigns across various pieces of legislation would further enhance understanding of the outsider tactics employed by the association. This thesis focused on one case study, which limits its ability to generalise LGNZ's media strategies across different scenarios. While the case study demonstrated how effective media strategies can be in high-stakes conflicts, the longer-term utility of

frequent media campaigns remains an open question. Future research could analyse LGNZ media engagement across numerous pieces of legislation to determine the extent to which it influences policymakers and the public. In particular, it would be valuable to assess whether media campaigns are impactful outside of election periods, when public and political sensitivities may be lower. Such a study would also contribute to broader knowledge about the role and influence of media in New Zealand's political processes.

10.5.1.3 A comparative analysis across Ministers of Local Government

A comparative study of the ministerial leadership styles and personal priorities of different Ministers of Local Government could offer valuable insight into how these factors shape LGNZ's lobbying outcomes. Examining variation in ministerial approaches would help illuminate how such differences condition LGNZ's capacity to advocate effectively for local government interests, including how advocacy strategies are adapted to ministerial preferences. Such analysis would also indicate the extent of ministerial influence over the policymaking process in New Zealand, particularly in setting the scope and direction of local government reform.

10.5.1.4 A closer look into the statistically non-significant factors

Several factors, such as government strength, personality-based factors, and issue characteristics did not show statistical associations with LGNZ's lobbying success. These factors were also not explored through the case study. Although found by this thesis to be statistically non-significant in the formal legislative process, these factors may still exert indirect influence on LGNZ's lobbying outcomes, and qualitative research could uncover the contexts and interactions in which they operate. This approach could also explore how these factors manifest in real-world cases, potentially enhancing their operationalisation for quantitative research purposes. As mentioned earlier, the quantitative phase of this thesis encountered confounding issues with a few of the factors examined, possibly because their operationalisation was based on aggregate rather than group-specific analyses.

10.5.2 The role and impact of outsider tactics for local government associations

Associations like LGNZ have typically been regarded as insider lobbyists, engaging directly with decision-makers to influence policy. However, LGNZ's use of both insider and outsider tactics suggests a more nuanced lobbying strategy than is commonly assumed. Further research into how and when LGNZ and similar associations employ outsider tactics, and the effects of these tactics on policy outcomes, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how these associations work within the policymaking process.

10.5.3 Examining interactions between factors to influence

An overarching finding from the case study is that LGNZ's lobbying success depended on an interplay of multiple institutional, organisational, and issue-based factors. However, much of the existing research on interest group influence has examined these factors separately, leading to a compartmentalised and fragmented understanding of the phenomenon. The case study findings indicate that there could be multiple pathways to achieving lobbying outcomes. Given that this thesis focused on a single case study, it cannot capture combinations other than those demonstrated in the context of the Bill. Future research could therefore explore the dynamic interplay of factors across different contexts to better reflect the complexities of how influence is achieved in practice.

10.6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to examine LGNZ's influence through its lobbying outcomes and the factors associated with its success, and to explore how these relationships operated within a specific legislative case. This thesis finds that LGNZ possesses moderate capacity to advance its policy preferences in final legislation. LGNZ's part in delaying the Bill used for the case study is also noteworthy as it created opportunities for additional consultation, concessions, and more substantive policy changes to occur under a different government. Although not the primary focus of the analysis, this outcome further suggests the effectiveness of LGNZ's lobbying.

LGNZ's lobbying success was found to be shaped by multiple factors. Quantitative findings highlighted the importance of the formal policymaking process, institutional access, and insider tactics. Qualitative evidence not only supported most of these statistical associations but also expanded understanding by illustrating the influence of key institutional actors and LGNZ's use of outsider tactics when formal channels were constrained. The case study further demonstrated how lobbying tactics, political actors and context, and institutional processes can interact to shape lobbying outcomes.

Quantitative findings showed that LGNZ was more likely to succeed when pursuing technical changes than when advocating for substantive changes that diverged from the government's priorities. The qualitative evidence demonstrated that while LGNZ was able to steer technical deliberations through evidence, a unified voice, and other strategies, its success in achieving major policy changes depended on factors such as political alignment, electoral timing, and transitions between administrations. Both analyses indicate that lobbying is less effective when a government has a strong policy agenda, highlighting the limits of success even when strategies are well executed.

Overall, this thesis advances understanding of LGNZ's influence on national policy, highlighting the contingent nature of that influence as reflected in the alignment between the association's policy positions and legislative outcomes. It contributes to the interest group literature by demonstrating how a local government representative body lobbied to shape national legislation. It also provides practical insights for similar associations seeking to strengthen their advocacy within the formal legislative process.

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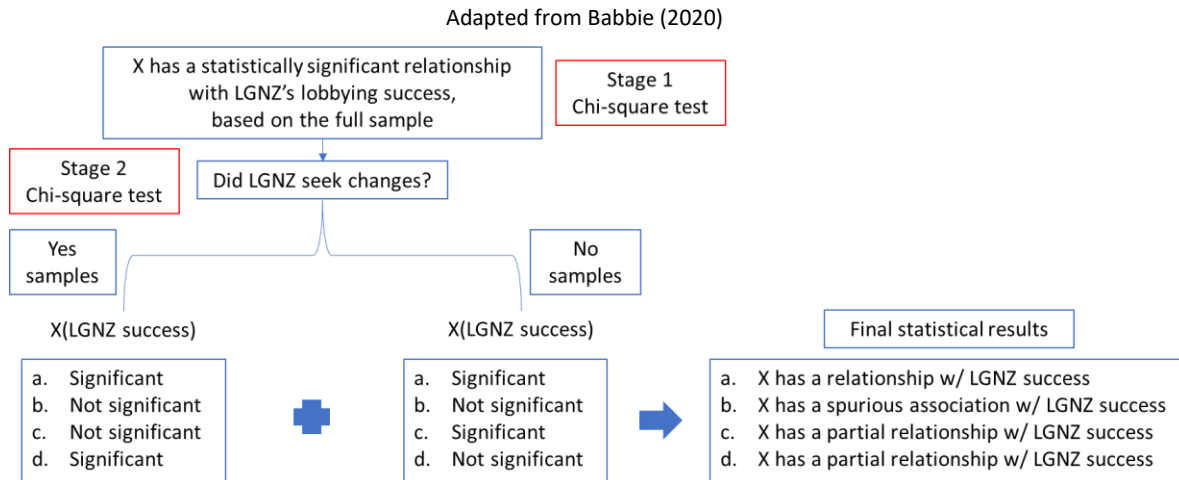
Appendix A: Detailed discussion of the statistical findings

Guide for interpreting the statistical findings

Before discussing the chi-square test results, it is important to establish some groundwork for better understanding the findings. As outlined in Section 8.3.1.3 of Chapter Eight, the analysis uses two techniques to differentiate between cases where LGNZ sought changes to a provision and those where it fully supported a provision without changes: ‘overall change success’ and the elaboration model. The first technique is relatively straightforward. For each piece of legislation, the analysis calculates the proportion of LGNZ’s proposed changes that were successfully adopted, relative to the total number of changes they recommended. This allows for the categorisation of legislation into three groups: those where LGNZ was unsuccessful, partly successful, or mostly successful. Provisions that LGNZ fully supported are excluded from the analysis, as these typically exhibit very high success rates, and their exclusion is not expected to significantly affect the overall results.

The second technique is Babbie’s (2020) elaboration model, which involves preliminary and follow-up chi-square tests. Upon identifying a statistically significant relationship between lobbying success and a specific factor, separate chi-square tests are performed for samples where LGNZ sought changes and where it fully supported a provision. The aim is to validate whether that factor maintains the same relationship with lobbying success in both groups of samples, indicating a valid statistical relationship. The elaboration model further establishes that when the relationship applies to only one group, it is considered partial. If the relationship is absent in both groups, the original relationship found is considered spurious. Interpretation rules under the elaboration model are illustrated in Figure A-1 below.

Figure A-1 Interpretation rules under the elaboration model



Institutional factors

H1: LGNZ's success is associated with centre-left Governments.

LGNZ is more likely to be successful under centre-right Governments.

Each legislative act was classified according to how much they changed in favour of LGNZ, as shown in the crosstabulation below. These results were then compared with the ideological type of Government in power (i.e., centre-right or left) at the time of each legislation's enactment. The crosstabulation shows that LGNZ was partly successful at least half of the time for both types of Government. However, a greater proportion of mostly successful legislation was enacted under centre-right Governments, whereas more acts showed no change in favour of LGNZ under centre-left Governments. Chi-square tests confirmed that this relationship is statistically significant.

Crosstabulation: Govt when the bill became law * Overall change success

			Overall change success			Total
			Not successful (0%)	Partly successful (14%-50%)	Mostly successful (>50%)	
Govt when the bill became law	Centre-left	Count	6	7	1	14
		% within Govt When Bill Became Law	42.9%	50.0%	7.1%	100.0%
	Centre-right	Count	2	12	9	23
		% within Govt When Bill Became Law	8.7%	52.2%	39.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	8	19	10	37
		% within Govt When Bill Became Law	21.6%	51.4%	27.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.000 ^a	2	.018	.018
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	7.644			.018
N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.03.

Success is independent of the ideological composition of the select committee.

Although a similar pattern between ideology and LGNZ's success appears at the select committee level, chi-square tests indicate that this relationship is not statistically significant. While the test on the full sample suggests LGNZ's success depends on the committee's ideological composition, separate tests for cases where LGNZ sought changes and where it did not both showed statistically significant relationships. According to the elaboration model (see Figure 6-9), this suggests a spurious relationship between LGNZ's success and the select committee's ideological composition.

Partial crosstabulation: Ideological composition of the select committee * Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal * LGNZ sought changes

Ideological composition of the select committee	Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Left	4	16	20
	100.0%	29.1%	33.9%
Balanced	71	26	97
	100.0%	45.6%	75.8%
Right	47	89	136
	95.9%	43.0%	53.1%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
LGNZ sought change No	Pearson Chi-Square	3.111 ^b	.077	.218
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	3.629		.218
	N of Valid Cases	124		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	4.064 ^c	.131	.125
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	4.095		.121
	N of Valid Cases	319		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	32.855 ^a	<.001	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	33.622		<.001
	N of Valid Cases	443		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.30.

b. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.59.

H2: LGNZ's success is associated with structurally weaker governments.

Success is independent of the size of the coalition/support parties.

Government strength was expected to negatively impact LGNZ's lobbying outcome. To measure strength, each Parliament was classified based on the total number of members from coalition and support parties, assuming that a smaller number means less dependence on other parties' support for passing legislation. Crosstabulation shows an unexpected but non-statistically significant trend: LGNZ had less success when Governments had many coalition or support MPs, particularly during the 48th and 52nd Parliaments.

Crosstabulation: Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government * Overall change success

				Overall change success			Total
				Not successful (0%)	Partly successful (14-15%)	Mostly successful (>50%)	
Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government	Few (5-4)	Count		1	6	5	12
		% within Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government		8.3%	50.0%	41.7%	100.0%
	Several (11)	Count		1	5	4	10
		% within Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government		10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Many (17)	Count		6	8	1	15
		% within Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government		40.0%	53.3%	6.7%	100.0%
Total		Count		8	19	10	37
		% within Contribution by smaller parties to form the Government		21.6%	51.4%	27.0%	100.0%

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.842 ^a	4	.098	.097
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	7.506			.101
N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 6 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.16.

Success is independent of the absence of a Government majority in the select committee.

Another measure of government strength is the presence of a Government majority within the select committee. A Government majority exists when the Labour or National party, together with their coalition parties, constitutes more than half of the select committee members. Support parties were excluded from this calculation as they are usually not part of the political executive. Furthermore, a confidence-and-supply agreement typically involves the support parties' backing of key legislation, such as the

Budget, in exchange for the Government's support on specific policies. Outside of this agreement, a support party may choose to oppose Government policies.

The cross-tabulation shows that select committees without a Government majority tend to adopt LGNZ's policy proposals more often (63.5% vs. 51.5%). While the full-sample test suggests LGNZ's success is linked to the absence of a Government majority, separate tests for cases where LGNZ sought changes or did not were non-significant, indicating a spurious relationship. Overall, success is statistically independent of the presence or absence of a Government majority in the select committee.

Partial crosstabulation: Government has the majority in the select committee * Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal * LGNZ Sought changes

Government has the majority in the select committee	Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
No	83	49	132
	100.0%	39.2%	63.5%
Yes	39	82	121
	95.1%	42.3%	51.5%

Chi-Square Tests

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	4.115 ^c	1	.043	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.108
	N of Valid Cases	124			
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	.296 ^b	1	.587	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.641
	N of Valid Cases	319			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	6.457 ^a	1	.011	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.012
	N of Valid Cases	443			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 89.21.

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 51.33.

c. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .66.

H3: LGNZ's success is associated with favourable select committee recommendations.

Success depends on the recommendation of the select committee.

Based on the crosstabulation, LGNZ's proposed changes have significantly better chances of being incorporated into the final legislation with the endorsement of the select committee. Conversely, a negative recommendation significantly reduces such chances.

Chi-square tests found the relationship between the recommendation of the select committee and LGNZ's lobbying success to be statistically significant.

Partial crosstabulation: Recommendation of the select committee * LGNZ was partially/fully successful * LGNZ sought changes

Recommendation of the select committee	LGNZ was partially/fully successful		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Not adopt the LGNZ proposal	0	6	6
	0.0%	3.2%	3.2%
Partly adopt the LGNZ proposal	7	35	42
	100.0%	97.2%	97.7%
Adopt the LGNZ proposal	113	89	202
	98.3%	93.7%	96.2%

Chi-Square Tests

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
LGNZ sought change					
	No				
	Pearson Chi-Square	61.048 ^b	2	<.001	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	15.227			.002
	N of Valid Cases	124			
Yes					
	Pearson Chi-Square	267.636 ^c	2	<.001	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	318.776			<.001
	N of Valid Cases	319			
Total					
	Pearson Chi-Square	384.095 ^a	2	<.001	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	469.869			<.001
	N of Valid Cases	443			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.73.

b. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.67.

H4: LGNZ's success is associated with agency advice agreeing with its position.

Success depends on the position of the administering agency.

Given the chronology of the New Zealand policymaking process, it makes more sense to compare the position of the administering agency (e.g., Department of Internal Affairs) on LGNZ's proposal with the select committee's recommendation. The strong relationship between the select committee's recommendation and LGNZ's lobbying success establishes the former as a reliable indicator of the latter. Statistical evidence shows that select committees often base their decisions on the position of the administering agency that considers LGNZ's stance in the departmental report. If the administering agency agrees with LGNZ, it significantly increases LGNZ's chances of success at the select

committee level. Conversely, if the agency has no position or disagrees with LGNZ's recommendations, LGNZ's chances of success are substantially reduced.

Partial crosstabulation: Position of the agency * Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal * LGNZ Sought changes

Position of the agency	Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Disagreed with LGNZ's proposal	-	5	5
	-	4.8%	4.8%
No position on LGNZ's proposal	9	10	19
	100.0%	11.2%	19.4%
Partly agreed to LGNZ's proposal	4	37	41
	100.0%	90.2%	91.1%
Agreed to LGNZ's proposal	109	79	188
	98.2%	92.9%	95.9%

Chi-Square Tests

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
LGNZ sought change					
	No	Pearson Chi-Square	.238 ^b	2	.888
		Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	1.583		1.000
		N of Valid Cases	124		
Yes		Pearson Chi-Square	224.700 ^c	3	<.001
		Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	254.989		<.001
		N of Valid Cases	319		
	Total	Pearson Chi-Square	314.832 ^a	3	<.001
		Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	369.834		<.001
		N of Valid Cases	443		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.30.

b. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.84.

H5: LGNZ's success is associated with endorsement from a coalition or support party.

A favourable change is more likely to occur when endorsed by a coalition/support party

The crosstabulation shows that the position of the support/coalition party did not have a significant impact on the outcome in cases where LGNZ fully supported a legislative provision, with all categories having high success rates. However, when LGNZ sought amendments, their odds of being incorporated into the final legislation is higher with the endorsement from a coalition/support party. Separate chi-square tests confirm the statistical significance of this observed relationship, revealing a partial association between LGNZ's success and the position of a coalition/support party.

Partial crosstabulation: Position of support/coalition party * LGNZ was partially/fully successful * LGNZ sought changes

Position of support/coalition party on LGNZ proposal	LGNZ was partially/fully successful		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Disagree	1	1	2
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
No position	110	129	239
	96.5%	40.3%	55.1%
Agree	11	5	16
	100.0%	83.3%	94.1%

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	.435 ^b	2	.805	1.000
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	1.802			1.000
	N of Valid Cases	126			
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	5.923 ^c	2	.052	.021
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	5.582			.021
	N of Valid Cases	327			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	11.694 ^a	2	.003	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	12.518			<.001
	N of Valid Cases	453			

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .87.

b. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

c. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .41.

Organisational factors

H6: LGNZ's success differs across administering agencies.

Non-conclusive findings on LGNZ's chances of success across administering agencies

The success of LGNZ's lobbying efforts was expected to vary with administering agencies due to potential differences in relationships between LGNZ and ministries or departments. To test this, agencies were compared in terms of how frequently they agreed with LGNZ's proposals. This approach is supported by earlier findings that showed a strong correlation between an administering agency's position, select committee recommendation, and the final legislative outcome (i.e., lobbying success). Comparisons were conducted in cases where LGNZ fully supported a bill provision (hence no change required) and proposals where amendments were sought. LGNZ's success rate did not show substantial disparity across ministries and departments for fully supported provisions. LGNZ appeared to have a higher success rate in certain agencies compared to others for proposals where it sought amendments. However, the chi-square test results

were inconclusive due to the failure to meet the assumption of expected values. Given many categories, particularly the authors of the departmental report, SPSS was unable to perform Fisher's exact test.

Partial crosstabulation: Author of the departmental report * Agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal * LGNZ sought changes

Author of the departmental report	Agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Department of Internal Affairs	62	25	87
	93.9%	41.7%	69.0%
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	-	1	1
	-	50.0%	50.0%
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	7	9	16
	100.0%	90.0%	94.1%
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	7	25	32
	87.5%	41.7%	47.1%
Ministry of Culture and Heritage	4	0	4
	100.0%	0.0%	80.0%
Ministry for the Environment	1	18	19
	100.0%	43.9%	45.2%
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	1	1	2
	100.0%	16.7%	28.6%
Ministry of Health	4	0	4
	100.0%	0.0%	66.7%
Ministry of Justice	12	20	32
	100.0%	42.6%	54.2%
Ministry of Transport	2	24	26
	100.0%	57.1%	59.1%
Ministry for Primary Industries	11	6	17
	73.3%	17.1%	34.0%
Public Service Commission	4	0	4
	100.0%	0.0%	80.0%
Te Arawhiti	-	1	1
	-	9.1%	9.1%
Treasury	2	0	2
	100.0%	0.0%	20.0%

Chi-Square Tests

LGZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	11.929 ^b	11	.369
	N of Valid Cases	126		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	37.565 ^c	13	<.001
	N of Valid Cases	326		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	52.200 ^a	13	<.001
	N of Valid Cases	452		

a. 12 cells (42.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .91.

b. 19 cells (79.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

c. 14 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .40.

No difference in LGNZ's likelihood of success between DIA and other agencies

To further investigate this hypothesis, a comparison was conducted between the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and other agencies regarding their stance on LGNZ's proposals. Given the DIA's responsibility for overseeing local government, it was assumed that they would have more frequent and potentially closer working relationships with local authorities and their representatives compared to other agencies. The crosstabulation revealed a slightly higher inclination for the DIA to align with LGNZ, both in cases where the association fully supported a legislative proposal and when amendments were sought. However, examining the two groupings separately did not result in any statistically significant findings. Overall, the apparent statistical association between DIA and LGNZ's success at the agency level is unreliable due to confounding.

Crosstabulation: DIA authored the report * Agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal * LGNZ sought change

LGNZ sought change				The agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal		Total
No	DIA authored the report	No	Count	5	55	60
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
	Total	No	Count	4	62	66
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	6.1%	93.9%	100.0%
Yes	DIA authored the report	No	Count	9	117	126
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%
	Total	No	Count	161	105	266
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	60.5%	39.5%	100.0%
Total	DIA authored the report	No	Count	35	25	60
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	Total	No	Count	196	130	326
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	60.1%	39.9%	100.0%
Total	DIA authored the report	No	Count	166	160	326
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%
	Total	No	Count	39	87	126
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	31.0%	69.0%	100.0%
Total	DIA authored the report	No	Count	205	247	452
		Yes	% within DIA authored the report	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	.245 ^b	1	.621	.735
	Fisher's Exact Test				.735
	N of Valid Cases	126			
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	.098 ^c	1	.754	.772
	Fisher's Exact Test				.772
	N of Valid Cases	326			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	14.620 ^a	1	<.001	<.001
	Fisher's Exact Test				<.001
	N of Valid Cases	452			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 57.15.

b. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.29.

c. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.93.

H7: LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of argument it presents.

Justifying expressions of support is linked to even better chances of success.

LGNZ tended to highlight the positive effects of legislative measures it fully supported. Part of the time, it did not provide further arguments for its expression of support. Hence, better lobbying outcomes can be observed for proposals under these categories. However, between a mere statement of support and bolstering it with an argument the latter has better odds of getting a proposal through the departmental report. Chi-square tests support this observed relationship.

Favourable amendments are independent of argument types.

On the other hand, when seeking amendments, LGNZ often framed its arguments based on the negative effects of a bill provision when left unchanged. Given this context, framing LGNZ's position in terms of wider negative effects involving the community seemed to have had slightly better outcomes than arguing in terms of narrower negative effects focusing on local councils. Interestingly, proposed amendments with no explicit arguments also led to better outcomes, but this could be associated more with minor amendments LGNZ sought without further explanation. Chi-square tests did not find a statistical association between the arguments LGNZ used and its lobbying success.

Partial crosstabulation: Arguments LGNZ used * Agency partially/fully agreed * LGNZ sought changes

Argument LGNZ used in support of its proposal	The agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
No explicit arguments	10	19	29
	76.9%	41.3%	49.2%
Positive effects on councils and/or communities	107	2	109
	94.7%	66.7%	94.0%
No effects	-	4	4
	-	30.8%	30.8%
Negative effects on councils	-	81	81
	-	39.1%	39.1%
Negative effects on councils and/or communities	-	24	24
	-	42.1%	42.1%

Chi-Square Tests

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
LGNZ sought change					
	No	Pearson Chi-Square	5.549 ^b	.018	.051
		Fisher's Exact Test			.051
		N of Valid Cases	126		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	1.553 ^c	4	.817	.828

	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	1.630			.841
	N of Valid Cases	326			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	99.792 ^a	4	<.001	<.001
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	115.720			<.001
	N of Valid Cases	452			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.90.

b. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .93.

c. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.20.

Overall, there is statical evidence supporting the hypothesised link between LGNZ's success and well-formed arguments on claim, particularly when emphasising the positive impact of a proposed policy.

H8: LGNZ's lobbying success varies with the types of evidence it uses.

Without evidence, an agency is less likely to agree with LGNZ's proposed changes.

The chi-square tests did not yield a statistically significant relationship between the types of supporting evidence presented by LGNZ and its likelihood of success. However, it was found that the act of presenting evidence itself is statistically linked to LGNZ's chances of success. Proposed amendments have a lower likelihood of being favourably considered by the administering agency when they lack supporting evidence. This relationship was not observed for bill provisions that LGNZ fully supported, as their success rate remained consistently high, regardless of whether there was supporting evidence or not. Overall, the success of LGNZ's lobbying efforts is linked to the presentation of supporting evidence, but only in cases where amendments are pushed.

Crosstabulation: LGNZ presented evidence * Agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal * LGNZ sought change

				The agency partially/fully agreed with LGNZ Proposal		
LGNZ sought change				No	Yes	Total
No	LGNZ presented evidence	No	Count	7	80	87
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	8.0%	92.0%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	2	37	39
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	5.1%	94.9%	100.0%
	Total	Count	9	117	126	
		% within LGNZ presented evidence	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%	
Yes	LGNZ presented evidence	No	Count	59	26	85
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	69.4%	30.6%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	137	104	241
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	56.8%	43.2%	100.0%
	Total	Count	196	130	326	
		% within LGNZ presented evidence	60.1%	39.9%	100.0%	
Total	LGNZ presented evidence	No	Count	66	106	172
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	38.4%	61.6%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	139	141	280
			% within LGNZ presented evidence	49.6%	50.4%	100.0%
	Total	Count	205	247	452	
		% within LGNZ presented evidence	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	.346 ^b	1	.557	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.720
	N of Valid Cases	126			
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	4.138 ^c	1	.042	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.053
	N of Valid Cases	326			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	5.461 ^a	1	.019	
	Fisher's Exact Test				.020
	N of Valid Cases	452			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 78.01.

b. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.79.

c. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 33.90.

H9: Testifying before the select committee is associated with LGNZ's success.

LGNZ is more likely to win changes in the legislation by engaging the select committee.

Statistical evidence indicates that testifying before the select committee is associated with better chances of winning amendments in legislation. To draw out these findings, the proportion of favourable changes in legislation was compared in terms of whether LGNZ requested to present before the select committee, as indicated in its submissions. For legislations where LGNZ chose not to appear before the select committee, there was no considerable difference in terms of having favourable changes in legislation or having none at all. On the hand, the probability of winning at least partial changes in line with LGNZ's policy position appeared to be substantially higher when it chose to testify before the select committee. The chi-square tests confirm the statistical significance of this observed relationship.

Crosstabulation: LGNZ requested to testify * LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes

			LGNZ was partially/mostly successful in its desired changes		
			No	Yes	Total
LGNZ requested to testify	No	Count	5	6	11
		% within LGNZ Requested to Pres	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	3	23	26
		% within LGNZ Requested to Pres	11.5%	88.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	8	29	37
		% within LGNZ Requested to Pres	21.6%	78.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.247 ^a	1	.022	.035
Fisher's Exact Test				.035
N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.38.

H10: LGNZ's success is associated with stronger support from local authorities.

Statistical evidence indicates there is strength in numbers.

Chi-square test results confirm that the extent of LGNZ's lobbying success in legislation depends on the number of submissions from local authorities. Legislation that received more submissions from local authorities are more likely to have changes in line with LGNZ's position. One in five legislations that received several council submissions had changed to some extent in favour of LGNZ. Notably, none of the legislation that received many of such submissions remained unchanged in relation to the amendments LGNZ was seeking. On the other hand, a few council submissions did not appear to have an impact on getting LGNZ's desired amendments in legislation.

Crosstabulation: Submission from local authorities * LGNZ was partially/mostly successful in its desired changes

				LGNZ was partially/mostly successful in its desired changes		Total
				No	Yes	
Submission from local authorities	Few (1-6)	Count		6	6	12
		% within Submission from local authorities		50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Several (7-14)	Count		2	8	10
		% within Submission from local authorities		20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	Many (15-66)	Count		0	10	10
		% within Submission from local authorities		0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count			8	24	32
	% within Submission from local authorities			25.0%	75.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.467 ^a	2	.024	.025
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	7.114			.025
N of Valid Cases	32			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.50.

Rank correlation corroborates chi-square test results.

Pieces of legislation were also individually compared using rank correlation, which corroborated the results of the chi-square tests. A positive correlation was found between the number of council submissions and LGNZ's change success rate. The higher the number of submissions from local authorities, the higher the proportion of favourable changes in legislation.

Rank correlations

Kendall's tau_b	Number of submissions from local authorities	Correlation Coefficient	Number of submissions from local authorities	Overall change success
			1.000	.271*
			.	.037
	Overall change success	Correlation Coefficient	32	32
			.271*	1.000
			.037	.
		N	32	37

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H11: LGNZ's lobbying success varies across its National Presidents.

Success does not vary with LGNZ National Presidents.

Given that the LGNZ presidency coincides with changes in government, the relationship observed between its National President and lobbying success is likely confounded by which political parties were in power. To address this, chi-square tests were performed using Government type as a control variable. Findings show that for centre-left Governments, LGNZ's success is independent of its National Presidents. On the other hand, tests could not be performed for centre-right governments, as Lawrence Yule served as National President from 2008 to 2017, throughout the Fifth National-led Government.

Crosstabulation: LGNZ President at the time of Submission * LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes * Govt When Bill Became Law

Govt When Bill Became Law				LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes		Total
				No	Yes	
Centre-left	LGNZ President	Cull	Count	5	7	12
			% within LGNZ President	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
		Morrison	Count	1	0	1
			% within LGNZ President	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Yule	Count	0	1	1
			% within LGNZ President	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Centre-right	LGNZ President	Yule	Count	2	21	23
			% within LGNZ President	8.7%	91.3%	100.0%
		Total	Count	2	21	23
			% within LGNZ President	8.7%	91.3%	100.0%
		Cull	Count	5	7	12
			% within LGNZ President	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
Total	LGNZ President	Morrison	Count	1	0	1
			% within LGNZ President	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Yule	Count	2	22	24
			% within LGNZ President	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
		Total	Count	8	29	37
			% within LGNZ President	21.6%	78.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

Govt When Bill Became Law		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Centre-left	Pearson Chi-Square	2.090 ^b	2	.352	.692
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	1.958			.692

	N of Valid Cases	14			
Centre-right	Pearson Chi-Square	. ^c			
	N of Valid Cases	23			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	8.971 ^a	2	.011	.007
	Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	8.170			.007
	N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .22.

b. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43.

c. No statistics are computed because LGNZ President is a constant.

Issue-based factors

H12: LGNZ's success varies with the policy position.

Success depends on LGNZ's policy position.

Chi-square tests confirm that changes occur in relation to LGNZ's policy positions. Nearly two in five provisions that LGNZ fully opposed were amended partly or fully in line with its recommendations. A similar outcome was observed for provisions where LGNZ had significant objections to their implementation but not their policy intent. For technical amendments and detailed changes, LGNZ was successful almost half of the time. Meanwhile, more than nine in ten provisions that LGNZ fully supported were retained in the final legislation. Chi-square test results confirm this pattern to be statistically significant.

Crosstabulation: LGNZ's position * Lobbying success

			Lobbying success			Total
			Not successful	Partly successful	Successful	
LGNZ's position	Fully opposed to the legislative measure	Count	57	7	29	93
		% within LGNZ's position	61.3%	7.5%	31.2%	100.0%
	Significant objections but not on the policy intent of the measure	Count	77	16	27	120
		% within LGNZ's position	64.2%	13.3%	22.5%	100.0%
	General support but with technical amendments or changes to the detail	Count	58	15	40	113
		% within LGNZ's position	51.3%	13.3%	35.4%	100.0%
	Full support for the measure	Count	4	7	116	127
		% within LGNZ's position	3.1%	5.5%	91.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	196	45	212	453	
	% within LGNZ's position	43.3%	9.9%	46.8%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	150.700 ^a	6	<.001
N of Valid Cases	453		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.24.

H13: LGNZ's success varies with the types of change it seeks.

Success depends on the type of change LGNZ sought.

Only three LGNZ proposals fell under typographical and consequential changes, such as correcting errors or ensuring consistency with other provisions. To meet chi-square

assumptions, this category was combined with the next closest one: detail or clarification. The crosstabulation reveals a clear trend—smaller changes had a higher likelihood of success. Over one-third of substantive changes proposed by LGNZ were at least partially adopted, rising to nearly half for detail or clarification changes, such as legal definitions. Almost all provisions LGNZ fully supported remained in the final legislation. Chi-square tests confirm the statistical significance of this relationship.

Crosstabulation: Change LGNZ sought * LGNZ was partially/fully successful

			LGNZ was partially/fully successful		Total
			No	Yes	
Change LGNZ sought	No Change	Count	4	122	126
		% within Change LGNZ sought	3.2%	96.8%	100.0%
	Detail or clarification	Count	70	63	133
		% within Change LGNZ sought	52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	Substantive	Count	122	72	194
		% within Change LGNZ sought	62.9%	37.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	196	257	453	
	% within Change LGNZ sought	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	117.683 ^a	2	<.001
N of Valid Cases	453		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 54.52.

H14: LGNZ's success varies across principles underlying its policy position.

LGNZ's success does not depend on its lobbying principles

LGNZ would uphold certain local government principles in issuing its position on a proposed legislative measure. The association's lobbying success was expected to be more associated with certain principles than others, given some insights on central/local government relations from previous chapters. Overall, LGNZ's success should therefore follow a pattern across these lobbying agendas, which could be identified through statistical analysis. However, chi-square tests did not find a statistical association, having compared LGNZ's lobbying agenda behind every proposal and their respective outcomes. This finding is consistent for both groupings where LGNZ fully supported a provision and where it sought changes in upholding certain local government principles. Overall, the probability that LGNZ's lobbying success is not associated with the local government principle underpinning its policy position cannot be ruled out.

Partial crosstabulation: Agenda behind LGNZ's position * LGNZ was partially/fully successful * LGNZ sought change

Agenda behind LGNZ's position	LGNZ was partially/fully successful		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
More discretion and autonomy	20	23	43
	90.9%	44.2%	58.1%
Funding	8	7	15
	100.0%	33.3%	51.7%
Less compliance cost	18	20	38
	100.0%	32.8%	48.1%
Clear legal framework	47	68	115
	97.9%	44.4%	57.2%
Local input	4	5	9
	100.0%	38.5%	52.9%
Local democracy and accountability	14	8	22
	100.0%	61.5%	81.5%
Localised solution	3	1	4
	100.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Others	8	3	11
	88.9%	27.3%	55.0%

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	6.076 ^b	7	.531
	N of Valid Cases	126		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	6.393 ^c	7	.495
	N of Valid Cases	327		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	9.873 ^a	7	.196
	N of Valid Cases	453		

a. 2 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.60.

b. 10 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

c. 3 cells (18.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.24.

H15: LGNZ's success varies across policy areas.

LGNZ's likelihood of success is independent of the select committee structure.

LGNZ's lobbying success should vary depending on the policy area involved, as different policies exhibit distinct issue characteristics (e.g., saliency or niche) that are known to influence lobbying success. To examine this hypothesis, select committees were used as proxies for the different policy areas that LGNZ lobbied on. Based on the subject matter areas of select committees (see Table 7-1, Chapter Seven), certain committees are assumed to deal with certain types of policies more often than others. For example, the Finance and Expenditure Committee may predominantly deal with redistributive policies, the Local Government and Environment Committee may focus more on regulatory policies, while the Health Committee may primarily tackle social policies. LGNZ's success rate was then assessed across different select committees to determine any variations.

For the bill provisions that LGNZ supported, every select committee had almost the same adoption rate. Meanwhile, there is a slight variation in cases where LGNZ sought amendments. Depending on the select committee, LGNZ had some success a third or half of the time, with only noticeable differences from Finance and Expenditure where LGNZ had the lowest success rate of 1 in 10 proposals. However, chi-square tests did not find these differences to be statistically significant.

Partial crosstabulation: Select committee * Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal * LGNZ sought change

Select committee	Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal		
	LGNZ did not seek changes	LGNZ sought changes	Overall
Finance and Expenditure	2	1	3
	100.0%	9.1%	23.1%
Transport and Industrial Relations/Infrastructure	3	23	26
	100.0%	50.0%	53.1%
Justice and Electoral/Justice	15	22	37
	100.0%	46.8%	59.7%
Governance and Administration	12	4	16
	100.0%	57.1%	84.2%
Local Government and Environment/Environment	62	55	117
	98.4%	42.0%	60.3%
Health	4	2	6
	100.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Commerce	-	3	3
	-	30.0%	30.0%
Primary Production	21	15	36
	95.5%	33.3%	53.7%
Māori	3	6	9
	100.0%	42.9%	52.9%

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	1.832 ^b	7	.969
	N of Valid Cases	124		
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	10.087 ^c	8	.259
	N of Valid Cases	319		
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	16.831 ^a	8	.032
	N of Valid Cases	443		

a. 1 cells (5.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.29.

b. 12 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

c. 6 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.87.

H16: LGNZ is less likely to succeed when there is strong opposition to its policy position.

LGNZ's success is independent of submissions from proxies representing opposing groups.

The number of submissions from business and industry groups was taken as a measure of potential opposition to the policy stances of LGNZ, given the differing views between the

two groups on how local government should operate (Wallis and Dollery, 2000; 2001). Chi-square tests did not find a statistically significant relationship from comparing LGNZ's success across legislations that received few, several, and many submissions from business and industry groups. Individual comparisons using correlation analysis have similar findings.

Crosstabulation: Submissions from business/industry groups * LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes

		LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes		Total
		No	Yes	
Submissions from Few business/industry groups	Count	5	6	11
	% within Submissions from business/industry groups	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
	Several	Count	12	14
		% within Submissions from business/industry groups	85.7%	100.0%
	Many	Count	6	7
		% within Submissions from business/industry groups	85.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	8	24	32
	% within Submissions from business/industry groups	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.740 ^a	2	.154	.187
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	3.308			.187
N of Valid Cases	32			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.75.

Rank Correlations

		Number of submissions from business/industry groups	Overall change success
Kendall's tau_b	Number of submissions from business/industry groups	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.159
		N	32
	Overall change success	Correlation Coefficient	.159
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.223
		N	37

H17: LGNZ is less likely to succeed on broad-based policy issues.

LGNZ tends to be more successful in legislation that received more submissions.

Chi-square-tests confirm an association between the salience of legislation, measured by the number of submissions it received, and LGNZ's lobbying success. However, the crosstabulation contradicts the expectation of the hypothesis, wherein a specific interest group will find it more challenging to have a significant impact on a salient policy issue, given the higher number of other groups vying for influence. LGNZ appeared to be more

successful in legislation that received several or many submissions compared to those with only a few submissions.

Written submissions * LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes Crosstabulation

			LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes		
			No	Yes	Total
Written submissions	Few	Count	7	6	13
		% within Written submissions	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%
	Several	Count	1	11	12
		% within Written submissions	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
	Many	Count	0	12	12
		% within Written submissions	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	8	29	37	
	% within Written submissions	21.6%	78.4%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.527 ^a	2	.002	.002
Fisher-Exact Test	11.023			.002
N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.59.

b. The standardized statistic is 3.253.

Local authorities are more likely to demonstrate strength in numbers in salient legislation.

Further statistical analysis found a correlation between submissions from local authorities and the total number of written submissions. This finding suggests that local authorities are more likely to demonstrate strength in numbers when vying for influence in publicly salient legislation. Considering earlier statistical results confirming the effectiveness of this tactic, this partly explains why LGNZ appeared to have achieved better outcomes when multiple groups were involved in the process.

Rank Correlations

			Total Written Submissions	Number of submissions from local authorities
Kendall's tau_b	Total Written Submissions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.419**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	37	32
	Number of submissions from local authorities	Correlation Coefficient	.419**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	32	32

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

No statistical difference in LGNZ's success between the Local Government and Environment Committee and the rest of the select committees.

LGNZ's success was also compared between the Local Government and Environment Committee and the rest of the select committees. LGNZ was expected to be more successful in this select committee, as it often tackles policies that may be considered

niche (as opposed to publicly salient) policy issues for local government. LGNZ did appear to perform better in the Local Government Select Committee than the rest of the select committees combined. However, chi-square tests verify that this is not a statistically significant difference.

Crosstabulation: Local Government and Environment Committee * Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal * LGNZ sought change

LGNZ sought change				Select committee partially/fully adopted LGNZ proposal		Total
				No	Yes	
No	Local Government and Environment Committee	No	Count	1	60	61
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	1.6%	98.4%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	1	62	63
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	1.6%	98.4%	100.0%
	Total		Count	2	122	124
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	1.6%	98.4%	100.0%
Yes	Local Government and Environment Committee	No	Count	112	76	188
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	59.6%	40.4%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	76	55	131
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	58.0%	42.0%	100.0%
	Total		Count	188	131	319
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	58.9%	41.1%	100.0%
Total	Local Government and Environment Committee	No	Count	113	136	249
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%
		Yes	Count	77	117	194
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%
	Total		Count	190	253	443
			% within Local Government and Environment Committee	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

LGNZ sought change		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
No	Pearson Chi-Square	.001 ^b	1	.982	1.000
	Fisher's Exact Test				1.000
	N of Valid Cases	124			
Yes	Pearson Chi-Square	.078 ^c	1	.781	.817
	Fisher's Exact Test				.817
	N of Valid Cases	319			
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	1.442 ^a	1	.230	.246
	Fisher's Exact Test				.246
	N of Valid Cases	443			

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 83.21.

b. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .98.

c. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 53.80.

H18: LGNZ is more likely to succeed on complex or technical legislation.

Lobbying success is associated with the length of legislation.

A theory of interest group influence suggests that the more complex a legislation is, the more important the roles of interest groups are in providing technical expertise. To determine the complexity of legislation, its total page number as enacted was used as a proxy measure. Complex laws tend to include elements that contribute to a lengthier document such as legal definitions, exceptions, conditions, and detailed procedures. Chi-square tests found a statistical association between the length of legislation and the proportion of changes favourable to LGNZ.

Crosstabulation: Pages as enacted * LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes

					LGNZ was partially or mostly successful in its desired changes		Total
					No	Yes	
Pages as enacted	Few	Count			7	6	13
		% within enacted	Pages	as	53.8%	46.2%	100.0 %
	Several	Count			0	12	12
		% within enacted	Pages	as	0.0%	100.0%	100.0 %
	Many	Count			1	11	12
		% within enacted	Pages	as	8.3%	91.7%	100.0 %
Total		Count			8	29	37
		% within enacted	Pages	as	21.6%	78.4%	100.0 %

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.527 ^a	2	.002	.002
Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact Test	11.023			.002
N of Valid Cases	37			

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.59.

b. The standardized statistic is 2.773.

However, such an association may be explained by the correlation found between the length of legislation and the number of amendments proposed by LGNZ.

A group could recommend more amendments the longer a bill is, thereby increasing its chances of achieving more favourable changes. This is likely the case for LGNZ based on the correlations found between the pages of the final legislation, the number of proposed

amendments from LGNZ, and the number of changes favourable to LGNZ. This means that the association chi-square tests found between the pages of the final legislation and LGNZ's level of success is unreliable as it may be explained away by the higher number of change proposals from LGNZ associated with lengthier legislation.

Rank Correlations

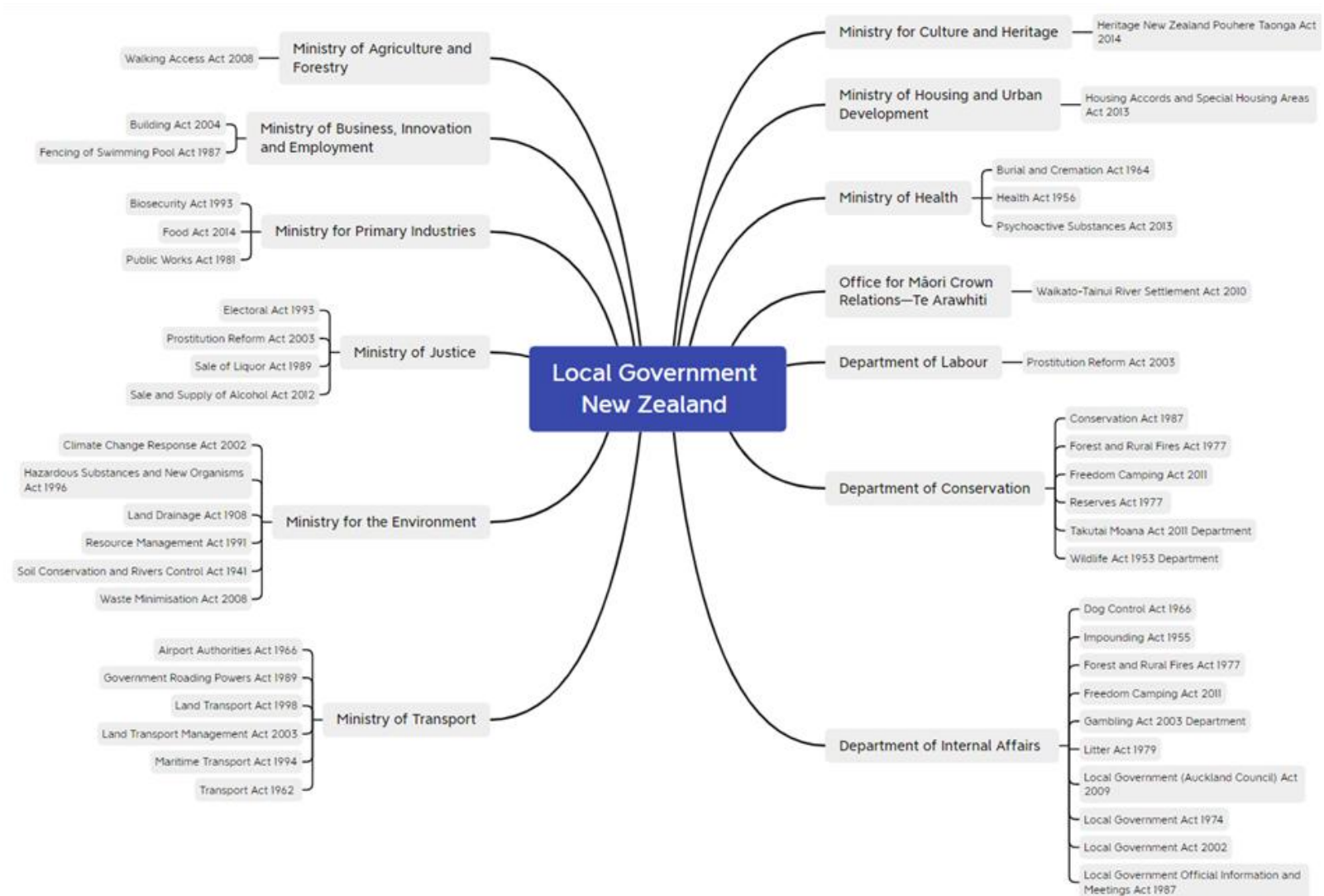
			Page No. as Enacted	Proposed Amendments	Change Success
Kendall's tau_b	Page No. as Enacted	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.521**	.470**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001
		N	37	37	37
	Proposed Amendments	Correlation Coefficient	.521**	1.000	.697**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001
		N	37	37	37
	Change Success	Correlation Coefficient	.470**	.697**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.
		N	37	37	37

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix B: Bills randomly selected for the statistical analysis

	Bill Title	Year Introduced
1	Alcohol Reform Bill	2010
2	Biosecurity Law Reform Bill	2010
3	Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Bill	2013
4	Building (Pools) Amendment Bill	2015
5	Building Amendment Bill (No 2)	2005
6	Building Amendment Bill (No 3)	2010
7	COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Bill	2020
8	Crown Entities Reform Bill	2012
9	Crown Minerals (Permitting and Crown Land) Bill	2012
10	Energy Innovation (Electric Vehicles and Other Matters) Amendment Bill	2016
11	Environmental Reporting Bill	2014
12	Food Bill	2010
13	Gambling (Gambling Harm Reduction) Amendment Bill	2013
14	Health (Drinking Water) Amendment Bill	2006
15	Health and Safety Reform Bill	2014
16	Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Bill	2013
17	Hurunui/Kaikōura Earthquakes Recovery Bill	2016
18	Infrastructure Bill	2020
19	Kāinga Ora—Homes and Communities Bill	2019
20	Land Transport (Enforcement Powers) Amendment Bill	2009
21	Land Transport (Wheel Clamping) Amendment Bill	2019
22	Land Transport Management (Regional Fuel Tax) Amendment Bill	2018
23	Local Electoral Matters Bill	2019
24	Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Bill	2018
25	Local Government (Rating of Whenua Māori) Amendment Bill	2020
26	Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (2010)	2010
27	Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (No 2)	2012
28	Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Bill (No 3)	2018
29	Local Government Borrowing Bill	2014
30	Local Government Regulatory Systems Amendment Bill	2015
31	Marine Legislation Bill	2012
32	New Zealand Infrastructure Commission/Te Waihanga Bill	2019
33	Public Finance (Wellbeing) Amendment Bill	2018
34	Securities (Local Authority Exemption) Amendment Bill	2010
35	Shop Trading Hours Amendment Bill	2015
36	Taumata Arowai—the Water Services Regulator Bill	2019
37	Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Bill	2009

Appendix C: Laws connecting LGNZ and administering agencies



Appendix D: LGNZ's lobbying progress on the 2016 Local Government Act Amendment Bill (No. 2)

	Policy issue	LGNZ	Department	Select Committee (Nat-led Gov)	SOP (Lab-led Gov)	Act
1	Requiring local authorities to agree on a funding formula for multiply owned CCOs	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	successful	successful
2	Establishing permanent substantive or multiply owned CCOs	significant objections	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
3	Omitting voting weight according to the size of council shareholdings	fully opposed	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
4	Allowing multiply owned CCOs to amend local authorities' development contribution policy	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
5	Omitting individual shareholder's agreement between a council and a multiply owned CCO	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
6	Empowering the Minister to direct the LGC's priorities and performance	fully opposed	partly successful	partly successful	successful	successful
7	Lowering of the threshold required for LGC to initiate a reorganisation investigation	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	successful	successful
8	Modernising LGC's accountability and reporting framework	fully support	successful	successful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
9	Excluding some information on reorganisation investigation from OIA 1982	fully opposed	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful	unsuccessful
10	Allowing LGC to transfer statutory and non-statutory functions between councils	fully support	partly successful	partly successful	partly successful	partly successful
11	Allowing the LGC to transfer activities from a council to a CCO	fully opposed	not tackled	unsuccessful	partly successful	partly successful
12	Reintroducing mandatory polls for certain types of reorganisation proposals	fully support	not tackled	successful	successful	successful
13	Empowering the Minister to set performance measures for council activities	fully opposed	successful	successful	successful	successful

Appendix E: Ethics approval



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

23 April 2024

Kate Nicholls
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Kate

Re: Ethics Application: **21/44 Lobbying from Within? A Two-Stage Examination of Local Government New Zealand's (LGNZ) Influence on Aotearoa's National Policies**

Thank you for your request for an extension to your ethics approval.

An extension for one year (until 10 March 2025) has been approved.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yhh2146@aut.ac.nz; segfrey.gonzales@gmail.com; Peter Skilling

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

10 March 2021

Kate Nicholls
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Kate

Re Ethics Application: **21/44 Lobbying from Within? A Two-Stage Examination of Local Government New Zealand's (LGNZ) Influence on Aotearoa's National Policies**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 10 March 2024.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yhh2146@aut.ac.nz; segfrey.gonzales@gmail.com; Peter Skilling

Appendix F: Interview tools



Participant Information Sheet (Interview)

Date Information Sheet Produced:
23 January 2024

Project Title
Lobbying from Within? A Two-Stage Examination of Local Government New Zealand's (LGNZ) Influence on Aotearoa's National Policies

An Invitation
Tēnā koe, I am Segfrey Gonzales, a doctoral student at the Auckland University of Technology. You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to better understand the national policy influence of Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), the association of local authorities in Aotearoa. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time, with no negative consequences to you, but your help would be greatly appreciated.

What is the purpose of this research?
Local governments lobby their national government quite frequently. There is the incentive to do so in that virtually every facet of local governance – whether service provision, regulation, or funding – is shaped by policy decisions made by the central government. The need to influence national policies explains why local governments organise into associations. Local government associations (LGAs) provide a means for them to collectively lobby the central government on relevant policy issues. Despite this important role that they play in central-local government relations, LGAs are understudied. They are not adequately covered in the public policy, local government, nor interest group literature. In particular, there is scant research that examines their effectiveness as a lobbying group. Against this backdrop, LGNZ is chosen as a case study. This research aims to determine its lobbying effectiveness and to find explanations for the outcome. Its policy influence will be examined by looking at how successful its lobbying is on selected pieces of legislation. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
The interview seeks insights from three groups of informants: current or former officers and staff of LGNZ; members and staff of select committees that had jurisdiction over selected pieces of legislation; and other central and local government actors. You may have been identified based on the significant role you had in the passage of a particular legislative act. This is determined by reviewing parliamentary records (e.g., Hansard, committee reports, and submissions) and transcripts of earlier interviews conducted by the researcher.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
You may confirm your participation by email at segfrey.gonzales@autuni.ac.nz. You must also sign the enclosed Consent Form. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, the removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?
The interview is aimed at gathering information on the role of LGNZ in the passage of a selected piece of legislation. The questions will thus cover what input LGNZ had, what other notable interest groups had a stake in the legislation, whether LGNZ acted in concert with other groups or separately, the lobbying tactics LGNZ adopted (e.g., testifying, drafting legislation), and whether the resulting law was consistent with LGNZ's desires. There will also be opinion questions on groups that had the most significant impact on legislation; the importance of LGNZ in its enactment; the general attitudes of MPs and staff towards LGNZ; LGNZ's general influence over the Parliament. An indicative list of interview questions is enclosed in this information sheet. The interviewees' accounts will be used to supplement the interpretation of the findings from an earlier analysis involving a systematic comparison between LGNZ's submissions to the Parliament and a selection of legislative acts.

25 January 2024

page 1 of 2

This version was edited in November 2019

What are the discomforts and risks?

I do not anticipate you will experience any significant discomfort or risk. However, you have the right to refuse to answer any question that causes you discomfort or that you deem detrimental to your personal and professional life. Please do inform me if such a situation arises and I would gladly move on to the next question. All the information you provide will be treated as confidential.

What are the benefits?

The findings of this research will lead to a better understanding of how LGNZ represents local interests at the national level and factors that may improve the odds of these interests being adopted in the national policy. In turn, they may provide directions on how LGNZ can foster a more enabling policy environment for their members.

As a participant, you will have the opportunity to express your opinion and have a chance to engage in a topic of interest to local authorities in New Zealand. As the researcher, I will use the information you will provide to write my thesis, which will contribute towards the achievement of my doctoral degree.

How will my privacy be protected?

All the information you provide will be treated as confidential. This means that only the researchers listed on this sheet will have access to your data. You shall never be directly identified in the thesis without your prior consent. You can give your consent by selecting yes to the appropriate question on the Consent Form. Otherwise, your privacy will be managed by using a pseudonym. However, the New Zealand local government system may be a close-knit community that such a measure cannot guarantee complete confidentiality. Accordingly, you have the option to review the transcript resulting from this interview. You may indicate your interest to obtain a copy of the transcript in the enclosed Consent Form.

The audio files collected shall not be traceable to any one individual and all shall be appropriately stored at AUT until such a time when they will be disposed of per AUT rules and regulations.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs for your participation other than your time (approximately 2 hours) for doing the interview and reviewing its transcript. It should take no longer than one hour for the interview and at most an hour to review the transcript.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I would be grateful if you would confirm your participation within four weeks of receiving this invitation. You may do this by email at segfrey.gonzales@autuni.ac.nz.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will share with you a summary of the overall research findings through email. The results will be made available once the data analysis is complete. Please be aware that it may take several months from the time you complete the interview until the data is analysed. Thank you in advance for your patience.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors, Dr Kate Nicholls, kate.nicholls@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 6325 or Dr Peter Skilling, peter.skilling@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5018.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of ATEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Segfrey Gonzales, segfrey.gonzales@autuni.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Kate Nicholls, kate.nicholls@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 6325

Dr Peter Skilling, peter.skilling@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 5018.

Date

Name

Position

Organisation

Address

RE: Invitation to Participate as an Interviewee in a Doctoral Research on LGNZ

Tēnā koe

I am Segfrey Gonzales, a doctoral student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), currently working on my thesis titled, 'Lobbying from within? A Two-Stage Examination of Local Government New Zealand's (LGNZ) Influence on Aotearoa's National Policies'. My research aims to investigate LGNZ's national policy influence by analysing its lobbying efforts on a selected legislation and identifying factors contributing to its success or failure.

I invite you to participate in an interview to discuss LGNZ's role in the passage of the **Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2019**. We will cover LGNZ's involvement in the legislative process, its policy concerns, lobbying strategies, how the law aligns with its goals, and other factors that may have influenced the Act. I have attached a list of questions for your reference.

Participating in this interview will provide you with an opportunity to share your insights and contribute to a topic relevant to local authorities in New Zealand. **The interview is expected to last no longer than one hour.** Your participation will be confidential, and no identifiable information will be used without your consent. Please refer to the attached information sheet for more details about the research and your rights as a participant.

If you are willing to participate, please sign the enclosed consent form and return it to me in person or via email. If needed, I can also seek permission from your institution on your behalf.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact me at segfrey.gonzales@autuni.ac.nz or segfrey.gonzales@gmail.com.

Thank you for considering this invitation. I look forward to your favourable response.

Consent Form (Interview)

Project title: ***Lobbying from Within? A Two-Stage Examination of Local Government New Zealand's (LGNZ) Influence on Aotearoa's National Policies***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Kate Nicholls & Dr Peter Skilling***

Researcher: ***Segfrey Gonzales***

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23 January 2024.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I grant permission for the researcher to use direct, attributed quotations from my interview.
- ☐ I wish to receive a transcript of my interview.
- ☐ I understand that a summary of the research findings will be provided to me through email once the data analysis is complete.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's email address:

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March 2021
AUTEC Reference number 21/44

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

The research aims to understand LGNZ's role as the national advocate for local government by studying its influence on specific legislative acts and identifying the reasons behind this. The study has two stages: first, conducting content and statistical analyses to explore factors related to LGNZ's lobbying success, and second, conducting a case study on the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2019 through interviews. The questions for the interviews are largely based on the findings from the first stage.

Legislation

- How did you become involved in the policy and legislative processes for the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2019, and what was your specific role?
- What were the most contentious aspects of this legislation from your perspective? What conflicting interests were involved, and was there significant agreement on any aspects?

LGNZ

- In your view, how influential is LGNZ as a policy advocacy group, and why?
- Which parts of this legislation were most significant for LGNZ, and why?
- What specific changes did LGNZ advocate for in this legislation?
- How successful was LGNZ in achieving its advocacy goals for this legislation?
- What activities did LGNZ undertake to advocate for its position, and which of these activities do you believe had the greatest impact on the outcome?

Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)

- Did DIA officials interact with LGNZ during the policy development or legislative process for this legislation? If yes, were there any changes to the legislation as a result of these interactions? If no, why not?
- To what extent did DIA officials agree with LGNZ's policy concerns on this legislation, and what impact did this alignment have on the final version of the legislation?

Select Committee

- Can you share any details about the select committee (e.g., chairperson, party composition, member dynamics) that impacted LGNZ's lobbying?

- How significant were LGNZ's achievements during the select committee process in shaping the final legislation?
- Would the outcomes have been different if LGNZ had not spoken before the select committee?
- Did LGNZ follow a specific strategy in framing its arguments, such as focusing on local government/community impacts or the effectiveness of specific provisions?
- How important was constructing compelling arguments and providing supporting evidence to LGNZ's lobbying success?
- Did individual submissions from local authorities contribute to LGNZ's overall lobbying outcomes?

Government

- Did the shift in government from National-led to Labour-led help or hinder LGNZ's advocacy efforts? Why or why not?
- Do you believe that the ideological differences between the two governments influenced the legislative outcome? How or why not?
- What role, if any, did smaller political parties play in LGNZ's lobbying efforts?
- How did the relationship between various Ministers of Local Government and LGNZ throughout the legislative process impact the outcome?