Public Matters
an accessible submissions process

Exploring the potential of speculative design to facilitate meaningful civic engagement for young voters in Aotearoa

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Abstract

Every person should have the ability to confidently and sustainably engage with the way the Parliament of Aotearoa operates and changes. Design has the potential to explore opportunities to bring people into civics, allowing greater citizen control, facilitating increased public trust in civic institutions and legitimising the decisions made.

The development of laws is a foundational way Parliament shapes the lived experience of Aotearoa around its citizens. Engaging in this process can be prohibitive and unsustainable for members of the general public, contributing to declining public trust in civic institutions. Owing to its core tenets, democracy functions best when its processes and institutions are engaged with and populated by a diverse range of carefully considered perspectives given the power to make a difference. This project focuses on creating robust parliamentary submissions as an opportunity for people to engage directly with the development of laws without requiring them to go through intermediaries such as their Members of Parliament.

Young voters (18-24) make up the focus group for this project, recording comparatively low civic engagement rates tied to barriers impeding meaningful and sustained participation rather than perceived apathy. The rates of young people's civic participation have increased steadily in past years at rates higher than any other group in the country (Electoral Commission). This progression indicates the value and potential of accessible solutions designed to increase ease of civic engagement and foster trust and legitimacy for this group. At present young people lack appropriate avenues which give them confidence to engage. When groups of the public under-engage with processes as significant as these, laws can be implemented that are not appropriate for the country broadly or will not be supported once put in place.

Speculative design has the potential to make this process more accessible for young voters by leveraging theories like that of plain language and participatory democracy to bring them into the conversation. This may assist young voters in creating robust submissions which can be acted upon by select committees.

This project leveraged a combination of secondary research and practice-based testing informed by the UK's Design Council *Double Diamond framework*. This approach culminated in the speculative digital tool *Public Matters*. *Public Matters* intends to aid young voters throughout the submission process; from understanding proposed legislation, constructing and editing a comprehensive written submission, submitting to the appropriate parliamentary select committee and engaging the user in a feedback loop. This aims to build trust in Parliament and facilitate sustainable patterns of engagement.

Key words

Civic engagement
Civic participation
Speculative Design
Young voters
Submission creation
Legislative development
Digital civic engagement
Select Committees
Participatory democracy
Plain language
Group collective intelligence

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A note on bias

While I have attempted to limit the ways my personal biases influence the creation of *Public Matters* I recognise that this is not wholly possible. I have lived my entire life in Wellington close to the physical manifestation of our Parliament. Throughout my entire life both my parents have worked for government ministries and more recently I myself have worked within one, and in partnership with one for this masters project.
This positioning has afforded me some ease with engaging with individuals in this space as I have had mutual connections that I have been able to use to move the project forward and allow it to be considered by a multitude of perspectives.

> " To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it, the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time"

(Arendt 109)

Contents

Fig. 1. *Public Matters 2.0 homescreen mock up,* digital image by author, 16 September 2021.

Introduction

While there are many avenues for formal and informal civic participation in New Zealand, this project focuses on the creation of digital parliamentary submissions as an opportunity for young people to engage directly with law development. When legislative design is left to a select few, laws can be implemented which do not work for the people of Aotearoa broadly, and trust in public institutions can suffer. It is important to allow people to easily engage with their civic right to participate by making esoteric processes accessible so that our civic institutions are strong and populated by varied perspectives that are more representative of our country.

This project responds to the central research question:
How might speculative design facilitate meaningful political engagement, and in particular how might the creation of a participatory tool make the legislative development process accessible for young voters in Aotearoa?

'Meaningful' in this context is a submission that either leads to the appropriate Select Committee recommending change to the legislation or acknowledging the contents of the submission (in the departmental report etc.). Young voters in Aotearoa make up the test audience for this project. They have displayed increasing rates of engagement with civics in numbers growing faster than any other group in the country (Electoral Commission). As voters they are already somewhat politically involved and therefore do not need to be introduced to the civic arena, allowing the project to focus on their relationship with the development of legislation.

The difficult nature of legislation and the challenges of engaging with the submissions process dictate that young voters are not the only group that would benefit from a more accessible submissions process. This project explores a speculative offering for one subgroup but allows room for distinct offerings to be developed in future as it is built on a broad set of theories.

Public Matters 1.0

In 2019 I undertook my Bachelor of Design honours year of study at Toi Rauwhārangi, the School of Design, Massey University and created the initial version of *Public Matters* — a project which served as the framing for this Masters project. The initial intention and tenets of the first version of *Public Matters* have been maintained while other elements have been iterated and replaced based on expanded testing and the opportunity to undertake more comprehensive research. Throughout this exegesis, the iteration completed in my honours year will be referred to as *Public Matters 1.0* and the iteration that is this masters will be referred to as *Public Matters 2.0*. If I am speaking about *Public Matters* generally there will be no notation of version.

Methodology

This project began with a literature review exploring the potential of enhanced civic participation; both theoretical, and practice-based. This allowed for a nuanced reflection of *Public Matters 1.0*. Testing the updated interface with individuals influenced the project as it developed and impacted the construction of the final output. A Double Diamond process (initially launched in 2004 by the Design Council) was followed throughout the project. Tangential leads and engagement with outside individuals meant that the process also comprised accelerated leaps and regressions throughout. The nature of civic engagement in Aotearoa is incredibly complex and could be explored in multiple ways. Utilising the Double Diamond framework enabled this project to explore broadly before focusing on developing one particular avenue, ensuring the project would not be stalled by the magnitude of possibilities explored initially. It is also significant to note that having an earlier base of the project in *Public Matters 1.0* acted like another Double Diamond in the process, predating this masters and providing a bedrock and direction to draw from.

Public Matters 1.0   Public Matters 2.0

Discover   Define   Develop   Deliver
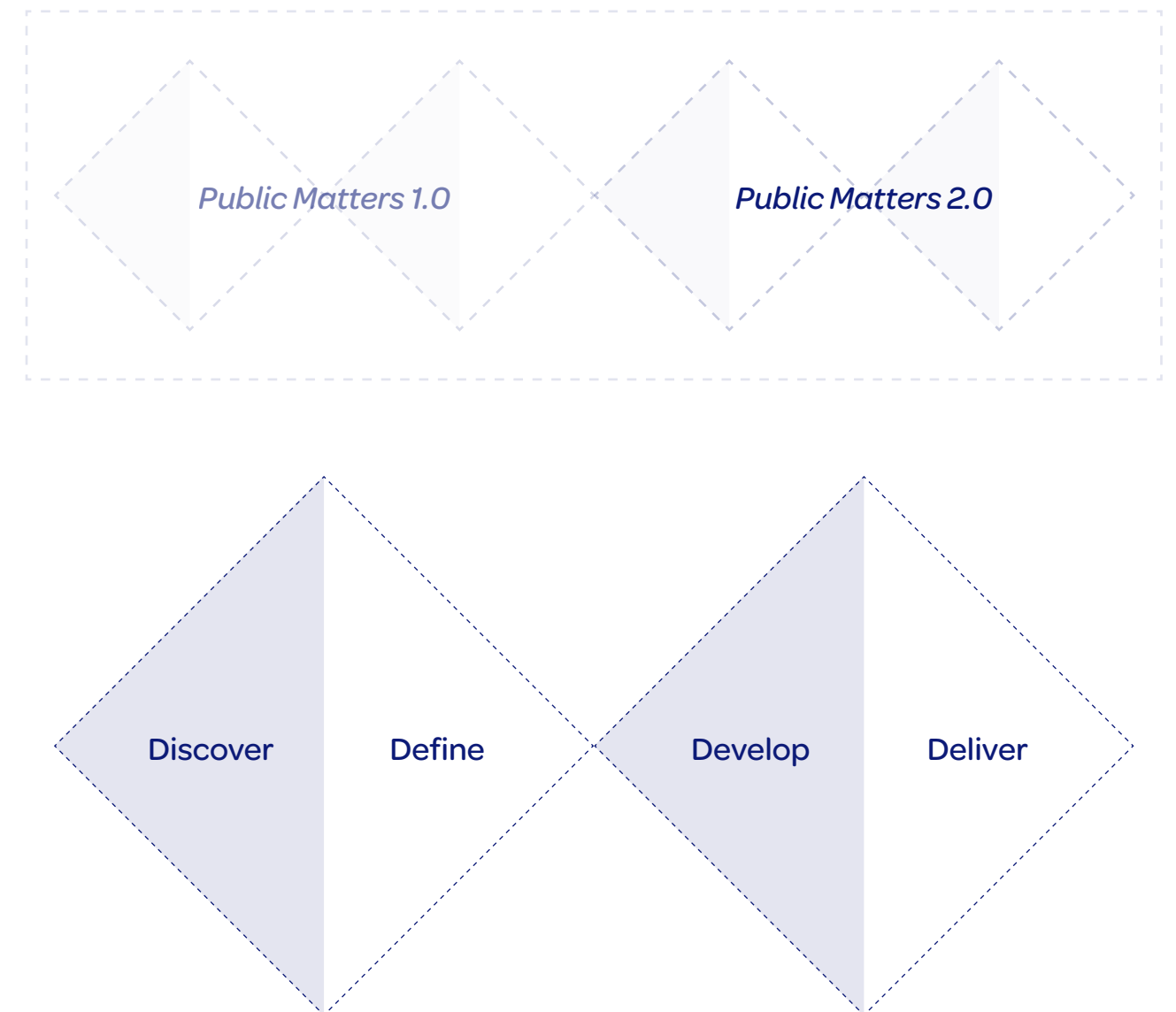
Fig. 2. *Double Diamond representation,* digital image by author. Based on image www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond, 16 September 2021.

Office of the Clerk involvement

This project has been undertaken in partnership with the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives. The Office of the Clerk is a politically independent organisation, separate from the Government, which aids Parliament to maintain procedures and operate effectively. The Office of the Clerk was interested in the project for many reasons. The notion of a more accessible submissions process tool aligns with one of the key strategic challenges of the Office of the Clerk — that more people in Aotearoa engage with their parliament every year. It also ties in directly with key elements of the Parliament Engagement Strategy (2018-2021), namely "...use innovative technologies to entice more people to be interested" (1).

In late 2019 *Public Matters* 1.0 was presented to various members of the Office of the Clerk. The project's findings were noted to be consistent with a large-scale engagement report that the Office of the Clerk had previously published. This gave them the confidence that a partnership with this masters project could provide insights aligned with their explorations into opportunities for enhanced civic engagement.

The Office of the Clerk has spent significant time grappling with how submitters can have a better experience 'submitting' their views and considering the constraints of the formal process. They signalled that my project, with its external lens, could be extremely valuable.

Background

Civic engagement is key to any democracy. In the literal tenet of democracy 'for the people, by the people' general public engagement demands priority, throughout civic processes. Voting is the act most often thought of when one discusses civic engagement of 'the people' — a metric by which Aotearoa performs relatively well. The number of people engaging with general elections has been increasing in recent years, with the 2020 election garnering almost 300,000 more votes than those cast in 2017 (Stats NZ). Voting is a significant act of civic engagement, as effective and publicly endorsed representatives are vital to enabling the reach and legitimacy of a sitting government (Rashbrooke 269). While voting in representatives is, and will remain, a significant aspect of the democratic model in New Zealand for the foreseeable future, there are other avenues of participation with less uptake by the general public despite their potential for impact and influence. Max Rashbrooke, a writer with a focus on democracy and economic inequality in New Zealand, unpacks the place of voting in modern society and the actions that should occur in conjunction with it in an effective democracy;

> "Voting works best when kept in its place: not when it is the only democratic act people perform, but when they vote after having been engaged in more deliberative forums. Deliberation is good at shaping an agenda and weeding out bad information and options; voting is good at aggregating imperfect individual assessments into an accurate collective one. Together they form an efficient system for decision making" (Rashbrooke 94).

The opportunities for public civic engagement separate from major actions, such as voting, are essential for a well rounded and resilient civic system.

A note on the 2020 election

The 2020 General Election was exceptional in many ways. It saw the highest voter turnout in Aotearoa of the 21st century and for the first time since the introduction of MMP saw a single party receive enough votes to govern alone. It is difficult to know (given the exceptional state of the world and the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic) whether these levels of engagement will be sustained in the years to come.

This project looks at the continuing upward trend of civic engagement by young voters in Aotearoa as an opportunity to further leverage that engagement to pave more accessible avenues for participation. Additionally, it aims to deepen the potential impact of young voter civic engagement.

Despite increasing voter turnout in general elections, other avenues for civic participation, including legislative development, are significantly under-engaged by the public, leaving key decisions about the development of life in Aotearoa to elected representatives and a small few privileged enough to engage sustainably (Charters and Knight 280). Dependence on a particular subset of the broader population can lead to the implementation of laws that are not always appropriate for the public. When the public can sustainably and meaningfully engage, legislative development and implementation occur within a more deliberate context that considers the lived experience of citizens more broadly, heightening public trust in Parliament and further legitimising the legislation put in place (Harré 15).

Laws govern every aspect of our lives in Aotearoa — from whether you can cycle on the footpath to the obligation to return to work after having a subsequent child if already on a government benefit. Their significance and reach cannot be overstated, yet the public wholly under-engage with their development, relying heavily on their elected officials and processes that have not been much updated since their implementation (Baker and Hurley 10).

"If participation is a necessary condition of democracy it becomes important who participates and with what interests. Substantive political equality requires not only equality of opportunity to participate for every member of the polis, but also equality of actual ability to participate, in other words sufficient resources such as education, time and money, and equal responsiveness of representatives"

(Rottinghaus and Escher 267)

How a bill becomes law

There are seven stages a bill passes through before becoming an Act of Parliament. Some of these stages also provide an opportunity for the bill to be amended. The public can engage with legislative development at all stages as illustrated in fig. 3., aside from Royal Assent, where the bill is signed into law by the Governor-General. At all stages, apart from the Select Committee stage, the public can engage through their elected Member of Parliament. This avenue is not highly utilised by the public. StatsNZ research carried out in 2016, focusing on civic public participation, found that only 7.7% of voters contacted their MP. During the Select Committee stage, the public can write their own formal submissions to the relevant group of MPs reviewing the bill and who have the power to recommend changes as it progresses. The same Stats NZ research found that less than 30% of voters had signed a petition or engaged with parliamentary submissions (this statistic is thought to be weighted towards signing petitions given their ease of use and access).

The systems involved with parliamentary submissions are esoteric and based on a solid understanding of political language (legalese) that is prohibitive for most people. To make a meaningful and informed submission, an individual needs to read the bill itself and any other supporting material, including past laws, as well as the official submission writing procedural document. All of these elements are incredibly time-consuming for people without a firm grasp of legalese. They are also expected to self-navigate information about which bills are available for submission, where they can make a submission and by what date. These barriers mean that many bills which are not widely publicised in the media do not receive significant public engagement and that well-intentioned submissions can be submitted to the wrong committee or miss the closing date.

Public Matters focus

Fig. 3. *Process of bill to law,* digital image by author, 16 September 2021.

"I think we'll get about three submissions. Two of them will be because people made a wrong submission to the wrong select committee, and we'll probably get about one. And we'll change nothing to the bill..."

(National Party member Matt Doocey)

What is a Select Committee?

A Select Committee is a subgroup of parliamentary representatives with a particular focus. They primarily examine proposed legislation after its first reading, considering public input and making their own inquiries about elements of the bill they deem to be significant. The committee reports back to the wider House of Representatives with either proposed amendments or signal they are happy with the aspects of the bill as per the first reading. There are 12 subject-specific select committees (focusing on business that ties loosely to the work of different government departments) and 7 specialist committees (whose work focuses more on the functions and maintenance of Parliament itself). Ad Hoc committees can also be formed as needed — the Epidemic Response Committee established on the 25th of March 2020 and subsequently disestablished on the 26th of May 2020 is an example of such a committee. It was put in place to consider the governmental response to COVID-19 (New Zealand Parliament).

Bills are generally open for public submissions for six weeks — this timeframe can be shortened if the Select Committee has less time to review the bill. A submission written by a member of the public expresses a personal opinion on a bill and its potential impacts. Submissions, accepted in English or Māori, can be made digitally through the Parliament online form, which captures comments and recommendations as two free text-capture fields. A submitter will not receive a copy of their submission through this format until they are published on the parliament website. Submitters can also submit digital files in lieu of the capture form. Posted submissions are also accepted. Submissions are public records published on the Parliament website after they are accepted by the Committee for consideration. Select committees can return submissions that are irrelevant or deemed inappropriate for consideration. A report of the committee's recommendations on a bill is also made public.

Why aren't people engaging with the process?

There are significant and entrenched barriers that inhibit members of the public from consistently exercising elements of civic participation. Former New Zealand Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Palmer and lawyer, Andrew Butler discuss the problems faced by democracy and governance in Aotearoa.

> "There seems to be a declining faith in the legitimacy of the decisions that are being made ... many feel their voices are neither heard nor heeded ... Public institutions will decay unless the public actively own them and trust them" (23-24).

This notion of public distrust, fuelled by disconnect from the general public, is echoed in other research done on civic life in this country. That is not to say people aren't engaging, rather that the current official avenues for engagement are not meeting the needs and aspirations of the general public nor allowing sustained, meaningful engagement (Harris 241). This should not be considered through a 'deficit lens' centred around the individual citizen, instead focusing on the opportunities of civic institutions to better engage with their citizens and form the basis for a thriving society (Nissen 12). In 2019, the Climate Response Bill drew over 10,000 submissions (proportionate to other bills this is extremely high engagement) although this number pales when you consider the estimated 170,000 people who took part in the climate marches that same year (a different approach to the same issue). People want to have a meaningful place in the conversation about the country's development; however, current official avenues do not foster that confidence or trust (Harris 241).

A more accessible submissions process will allow the general public to better engage with Parliament through processes and structures they already favour, allowing for more impactful participation with the potential to make nuanced changes to legislation as it is developed. An accessible submissions process is essential to foster trust and legitimacy within the democratic process, ensuring that our civic institutions are strong and backed by the general population who are able, if they choose, to readily engage with them (Butler and Palmer 24).

Audience

General audience

No single design approach can serve the needs of the public generally. The underlying concepts of civic engagement utilised for this project have the potential to be leveraged for other offerings for distinct audience groups. The road toward a more participatory and deliberative democracy is a long one, with many small steps aggregating to reach significant changes. *Public Matters* operates as an exploration into the direction these steps could point in. Law and public policy researcher, Max Harris discusses this notion, stating:

> "If we can continually expand the circle of those who feel they can contribute to New Zealand politics — and in doing so, alter who holds power — we will not only be in a position where good ideas can be implemented we will also have a groundswell of individuals, groups and organisations willing to continue to channel evidence-based, values-driven solutions into our politics for years to come" (Harris 242).

In this speculative context, *Public Matters* seeks to explore how the building of such a groundswell may occur, recognising the power of ripple effects opening up civic engagement in Aotearoa for an ever-broadening range of perspectives. This project acknowledges that there are many other groups in Aotearoa who would benefit from better avenues for civic engagement. These include: non-voters and those who are significantly disconnected from the political process in this country; Māori — with a Māori led or partnered approach giving appropriate authority to existing structures of civic whanaungatanga (Stephens 91); migrant populations and new settlers; people with complex accessibility and cognitive needs; people who do not engage digitally; alongside a multitude of others.

Specific audience

This project's speculative design approach focuses on young voters (18-24), with a wider potential audience that includes much of the population of Aotearoa. Assessing traditional civic engagement metrics like voter turnout, this group can be seen to be increasing their rates of engagement quicker than any other in the country. Across the last three General Elections, their statistics of voters as a percentage of the total enrolled rose 15.29% (Stats NZ). Voters in Aotearoa lack confidence they can influence Parliament. StatsNZ found 37.3% identify a low belief in their potential impact and only 3.8% identified a very high belief. 32% of voters lack sufficient understanding of how Parliament makes decisions. These are both opportunities that a more accessible submissions process can address.

Barriers

Research shows that young voters in Aotearoa are not confident civic institutions will meaningfully engage with their perspectives. This drives lower rates of participation than those found in other groups. The main barriers to submission process engagement for young voters are:

Lack of Awareness: Many are unaware that the submissions process is something they can engage with, while others lack visibility on the bills available for submission at a given time.

Lack of Time: The current process places too high a demand on an individual's time and relies on them to self-navigate a myriad of information and processes. This includes; relevant content, how to construct a robust submission, where and when to submit.

Lack of Understanding: Bills are written in legalese which is prohibitive to most people. Understanding this content can be too time-consuming for sustained engagement. The difficulties people face engaging confidently with this kind of content can act as a barrier as individuals may not feel adequate to respond.

Lack of Confidence: The formal and esoteric nature of legislation and Parliament more broadly contributes to a lack of confidence within the general public that they can make meaningful impacts on such a vast machine. The Colmar Brunton report commissioned by the Office of the Clerk noted that people often felt 'actively discouraged' to engage at a parliamentary level because of its scale and reach, compared to civic engagement at a local level (8).

Behavioral patterns

Research into the uptake and success of designed civic interventions has found that users should not be expected to break existing patterns of behaviour, to minimise the effort needed for sustained engagement (Colmar Brunton 7). Young people are shown to spend significant amounts of time engaging with technology, such as smartphones and computers. A report on youth civic engagement published by UNICEF described the digital landscape as being synonymous with young people's civic participation (6). The format of *Public Matters* as a digital tool echoes and fits into these behavioural patterns and allows for information to be readily updated as necessary.

Gatekeepers of effective participation

Tools that aid civic engagement act in partnership with the governing process they feed into. Parliament respecting and responding to increased public submissions is key to sustained uptake and increased trust. The 2018-2021 Parliamentary Engagement Strategy signals a focus on the use of innovative technological offerings to more effectively incorporate the general public into established parliamentary processes (House of Representatives).

This project acknowledges that from a parliamentary perspective the processes associated with handling submissions remain largely unchanged despite an increase in their numbers over past years. For reference, the 48th Parliament of New Zealand (2005-2008) recorded a total of 3459 submissions. The 52nd Parliament (2017-2020) received far more, with its three highest engagement bills receiving 75,135 submissions between them — End of Life Choice Bill, Abortion Legislation Bill, Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill (Parliament website). It is worth noting that in the context of this project that number is still not incredibly high when you consider the number of bills available to be submitted on, and the far larger number of individuals who could have submitted if the process were more accessible. Through the partnership with the Office of the Clerk it is the understanding of my project that these processes are under review, to allow for increased public engagement and appropriate governmental response to occur in future.

"Gatekeepers are no longer people who control the flow of information; they are the people who can translate what is available into meaningful public knowledge."

(Macaulay 69)

Precedents

Precedents

There are a number of design precedents in the civic space that helped guide the development of my speculative prototype. This section highlights significant precedents which informed my project. I focused primarily on digital civic interventions as the behavioural patterns of my audience indicate they provide a significant opportunity for sustained engagement (Colmar Brunton 7).

The following pages detail and explore the precedents:
• Politics vs Policies
• Government Digital Services
• vTaiwan
• TheyWorkForYou
• FYI
• Back of a Napkin

It's not
dumbing down

it's opening up

Government Digital Service

www.insidegov.uk.blog.gov.uk

Politics vs Policies

Politics vs Policies was a one off publication, distributed at key transport locations throughout London in the lead up to the 2019 election. The publication sought to educate the British public about policies proposed by different parties. The use of plain language to cut through overly complicated political language was particularly influential to my project, as it provided a case study where plain language was seen to ameliorate the ability of voters to understand the broader political landscape with more confidence. The publication prioritises clear and structured communication, something *Public Matters 2.0* continues to draw on. Only key information is included and is delivered as simply as possible.

Government Digital Services

In recent years the UK has implemented accessible solutions across a range of government services, sectors and platforms to better allow the general public to engage. In particular, the Plain Language UK campaign served as a key precedent with plain language present as a driving force in this project. Research undertaken found the average reading age for adults in the UK to be 9 years old, a fact that isn't always considered by public sector communicators. The project defines 'Plain Language' as: "… a message written with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice that is clear and concise." I aligned my project with this definition and used it as a barometer of success alongside testing tools sourced from Digital.govt.nz.

vTaiwan

vTaiwan is a combination online/offline consultation programme which connects government with citizens to help lawmakers implement decisions with strong backing. In 2015, *vTaiwan* enabled the general public to engage in the regulation of Uber to ensure fair competition with other pre-existing taxi services. The crowd sourcing platform *Pol.is* was leveraged which allowed ideas to be crowdsourced from any individual who wished to contribute. The initiative utilised online and offline methods to ensure the process was transparent and open to public engagement and scrutiny. Initially during crowdsourcing, *Pol.is* observed division between distinct groups, which through a process of deliberation became almost universal agreement on the recommendations that would be put forward. The 7 proposals, with an 80% or higher approval rating, were put to Uber in a live streamed public meeting with government officials. The process resulted in Uber and other groups making important concessions in response to the suggestions, and the government adopted new regulations in line with *vTaiwan*'s recommendations (Horton).

This precedent focuses on the in-depth and multi tool development of one piece of legislation with a focus on increased public participation from start to finish, whereas *Public Matters* focuses on how the general public can better feed into one key stage of legislative development with the potential for meaningful change to occur. Notions of crowdsourcing and deliberation cited in this precedent informed the development of the speculative prototype as they opened up the possibility for engagement that was less focused on aggregated individual opinion, but that could lead to greater sense of legitimacy and consensus. It also serves as a precedent for the kind of expanded civic engagement Aotearoa could explore in the future where citizen power is increased outside of the submissions process. Fig.6 details the process flow and tools that interacted within the broader context of the *vTaiwan* case study. This project acknowledges the multitude of tools and parties that exist in the civic space in Aotearoa and that exploring how they coexist is important to sustain well rounded civic engagement. It is a key next step to assess how a tool like *Public Matters* could interact with others. For example, would many users be brought into a tool like *Public Matters* through more discursive platforms such as Instagram which Parliament has leveraged in the past to promote bills up for submission?
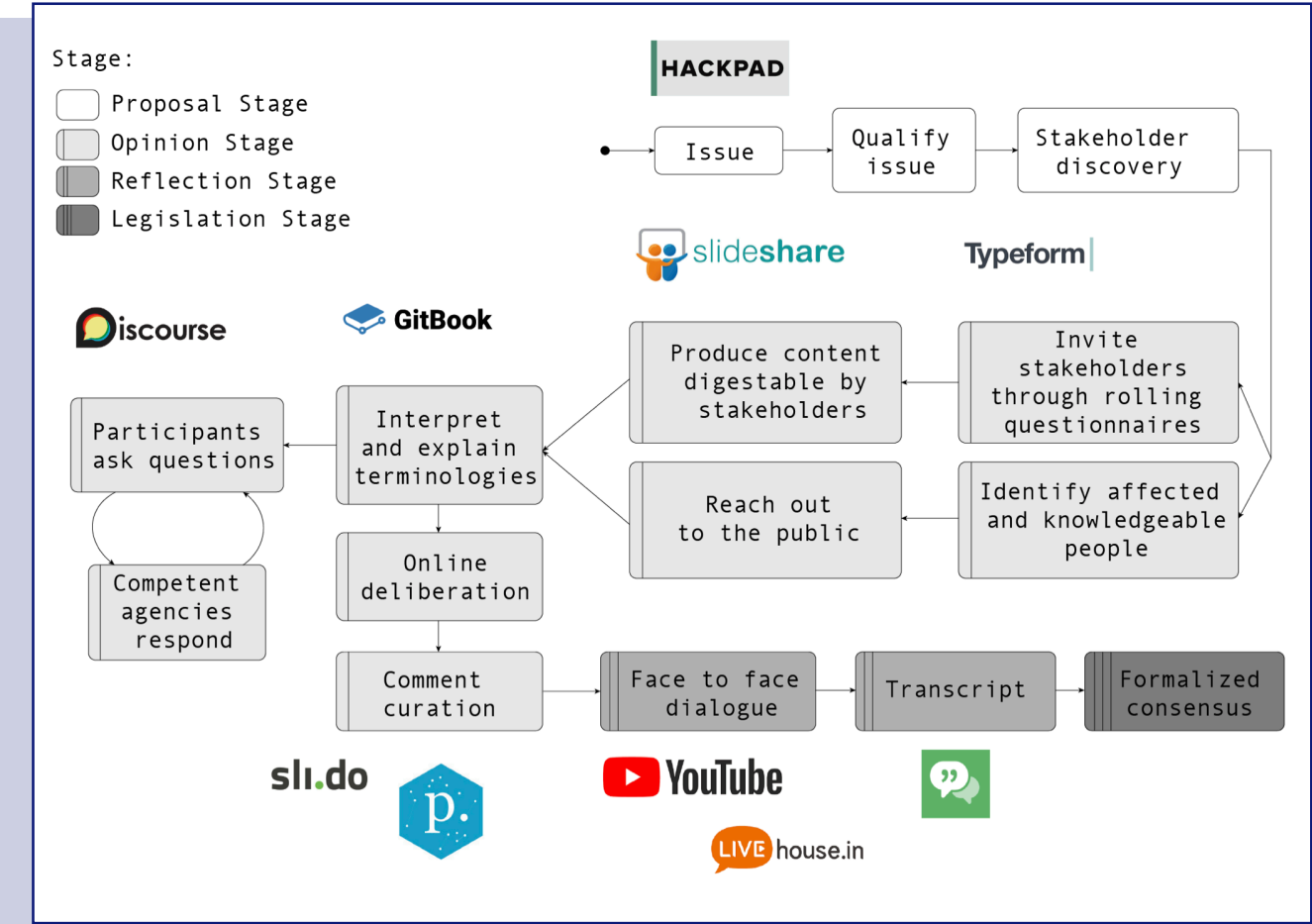
Fig.6. *vTaiwan process map*, vTaiwan, info.vtaiwan.tw. Site states: 'Content: CC0 No Rights Reserved'. Accessed 16 September 2021.
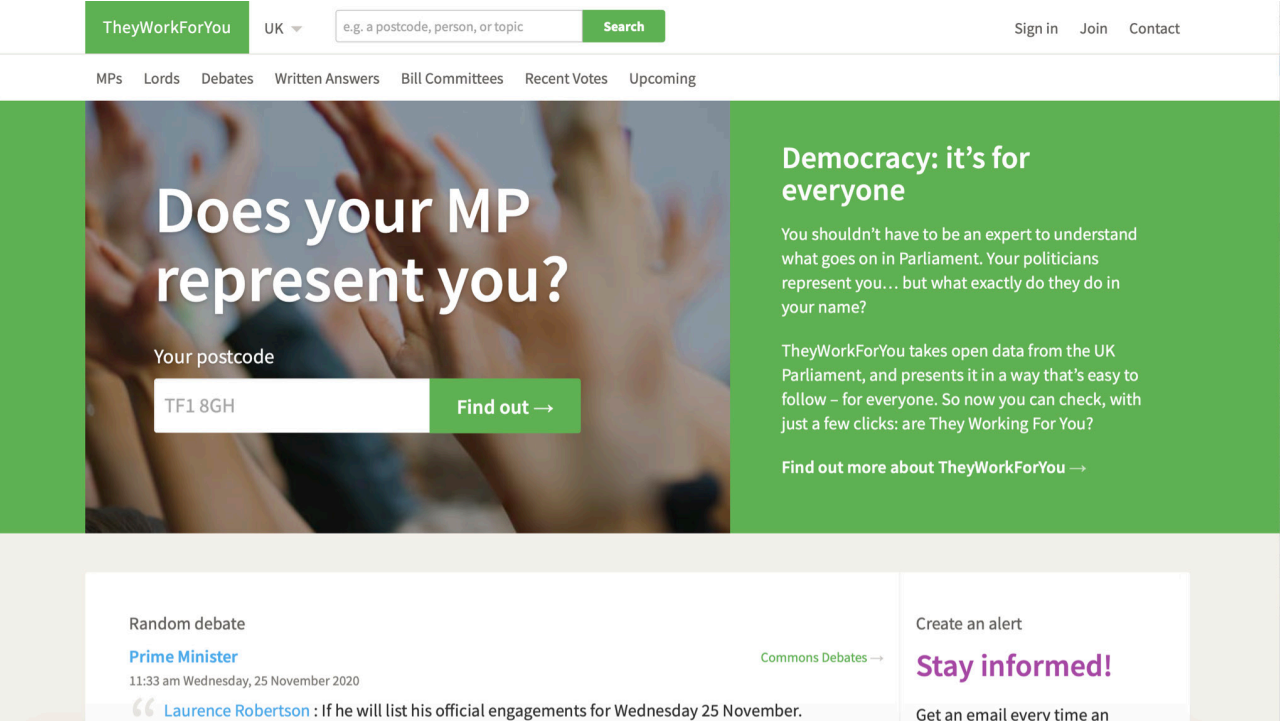
TheyWorkForYou

TheyWorkForYou is a British website that aims to make data about government more accessible to the public. *TheyWorkForYou* distills parliamentary goings-on into simple, easy to share pieces of information. It summarises MPs' voting records and registers how often they vote, speak, and receive answers to written questions. Some have suggested that it may oversimplify and gloss over context in favour of shareable bites. This is a tension *Public Matters* has considered throughout its development, erring on the side that one can make complicated and esoteric things as simple as possible but that oversimplification impinges on the potential success of the response. Legislation as it currently stands can absolutely be made more accessible but there will always be a particular level of interest needed on the part of the user to engage with civics in Aotearoa in the first place (Shaw 127). *Public Matters* has explored this tension and some functionality elements (primarily the inclusion of favourability indicators) were removed during testing because they were seen to be oversimplifying the process.
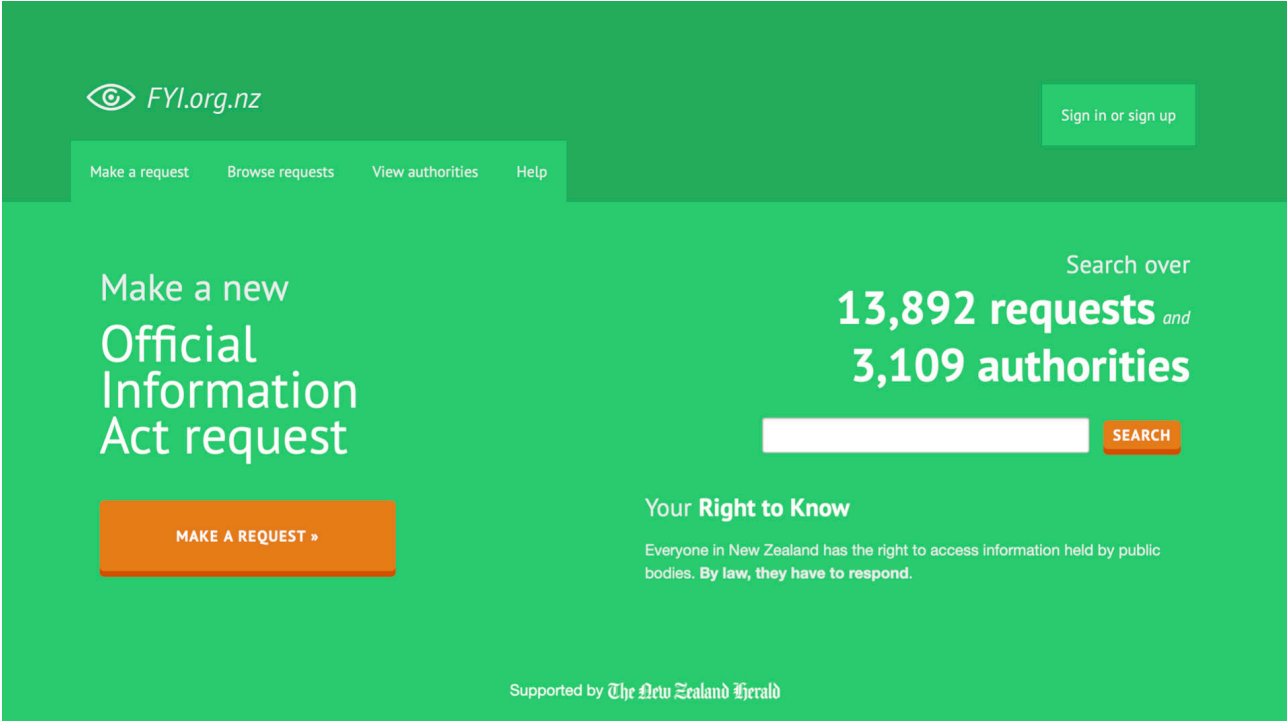
FYI

FYI is a New Zealand based digital platform which helps users make Official Information Act (OIA) requests and then publishes the results to make them readily accessible to the general public. The notion of transparency as a function of increased trust and legitimacy in this precedent drove some of the development of *Public Matters 2.0*, particularly in the inclusion and parameters of the feedback loop. Feedback loops are seen to be key in building trust between citizens and a governing body even when suggestions put forward by the public are not implemented. A DesignFix project in partnership with the Cork County Council noted that citizens who received updates on the progress of their feedback had a 30% more favourable opinion of the relevant civic institution and remained largely favourable even when their suggestions were not actioned (Queensbury 13). Having a flow of communication that goes both ways builds trust that the governing body has considered and responded appropriately to the perspectives of the public.

Back *of a* Napkin

New projects are exciting. Answering *five questions* will help
sort out some basics that are crucial to your future success.

LET'S GO

TERMS OF USE   BROUGHT TO YOU BY
                 BUDDLEFINDLAY

· · · · 5

What happens to the project if you break up?

· _____ gets to take all the digital assets and carry on,
and the rest of us will wish them well

· We will each get the chance to offer to buy the others out

· We will all agree not to use any branding that we've developed for
the project, but we'll each be able to take any code or other
development work away under license and do our own thing

NEXT

Fig. 9. *Back of a Napkin compilation*, digital screenshots by author, Buddle Findlay, www.backofanapkin.co.nz/start. Reproduced by permission of the rights holder. Accessed 16 September 2021.

Back of a Napkin

Although not directly related to civic engagement, the digital tool, *Back of a Napkin* formed a pivotal precedent for *Public Matters 2.0*. The platform guides users through a series of questions to create a simple legal contract between parties at the beginning of collaboration to get in writing the key agreed upon elements. The tool recognises the significance of the input of text by a user and prioritises that journey. At the end of a series of questions the user is given a contract populated by the information they provided in full and formatted appropriately.

This was significant to observe as a barrier *Public Matters 1.0* grappled with was what to do with the text offered up by users. Upon critical reflection it became clear that leaving users to format a submission on their own even if they had been guided through a series of thought exercises created a barrier to engagement with the submissions process. The work of *Back of a Napkin* gave me a precedent with which to explore working backwards from a robust submission into a series of questions that would allow the *Public Matters 2.0* to infill and format a submission with the user, further simplifying the process for them.

"**People aren't complacent and they're not sedated and they want to have a voice. They just have to have the spaces in which they can have a voice.**"

(Harris 241)

Concepts

Research based foundational concepts form the bedrock on which *Public Matters* is built. These foundations offer the potential for other offerings to be developed, meeting the distinct needs of other audience groups, to mitigate the impacts of potential unequal influence. The following concepts are those that were most significant to the development of this speculative offering of *Public Matters*.

Plain language

The principle of plain language shows that the use of simple and accessible language is key to allow the greatest cross section of people to engage confidently with content. The New Zealand Digital Government department found that "only 16% of adults are considered to have high literacy levels." They also demonstrated that literacy levels are shown to diminish further when a person feels stressed or is unfamiliar with the broader context. Following plain language guidelines are key to help build user confidence that they have a good understanding of the bill as presented to them and are positioned to appropriately respond. Tools detailed on digital.govt.nz were used to assess plain language within the *Public Matters 2.0* prototype. The focus was on meeting the recommended age score of 12. This level was met throughout the prototype and should continue to be upheld in a more comprehensive development of the tool.

Participatory democracy

The theory of participatory democracy focuses on meaningful citizen engagement that informs the direction and nuanced operation of civic institutions. Students for Democratic Society introduced the term 'participatory democracy' in a widely published statement in 1962. Their intention was to call for greater citizen control in the American government to mitigate felt powerlessness (Hauptmann 401).

A participatory democracy lens takes the position that representative democracy (as typified by the current political system in Aotearoa) does not go far enough in enabling key decisions to be made by and with the public. The theory of participatory democracy is directly connected to the notion of a more accessible submissions process. With enhanced participation comes heightened potential for impact and change.

The intent of *Public Matters* is inherently participatory in nature as it focuses on enabling members of the general public to communicate their perspectives and lived experience to parliament more readily, thereby participating and potentially influencing the development of legislation.

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

Developed in 1969 by Sherry Arnstein, the Ladder of Citizen Participation explores the degree to which citizens can be empowered by their governing institutions. The higher on the ladder the more power is shared with the citizens, the lower on the ladder the more control is held by the governing body. Given the difficulty most of the general public face confidently engaging with the submissions process, it could be considered that the current process sits within 'Informing' rung rather than 'Consultation.' The 'Informing' rung of the ladder is characterised by a flow of information which is largely one way with little to no ability for the general public to respond appropriately. A more accessible submissions process would be situated in the 'Placation' rung of the ladder, the general public would still not have the ability to veto or guarantee outcomes via their submissions but they would be granted a higher degree of influence over the process.

Design has the potential to allow people to engage with the submissions process with more ease, opening up the process and in turn enabling the public to situate themselves somewhat higher on the ladder of citizen participation. The extent of this movement up the ladder is, however, dictated in large part by the response of Parliament and the value they place in these submissions. *Public Matters* offers a more accessible path to engagement for the general public with Parliament but it is important that Parliament accept and acknowledge these contributions in meaningful ways for the tool to be successful in an ongoing capacity.

Citizen Control

Delegation

Partnership

Placation

Consultation

Informing

Therapy

Manipulation
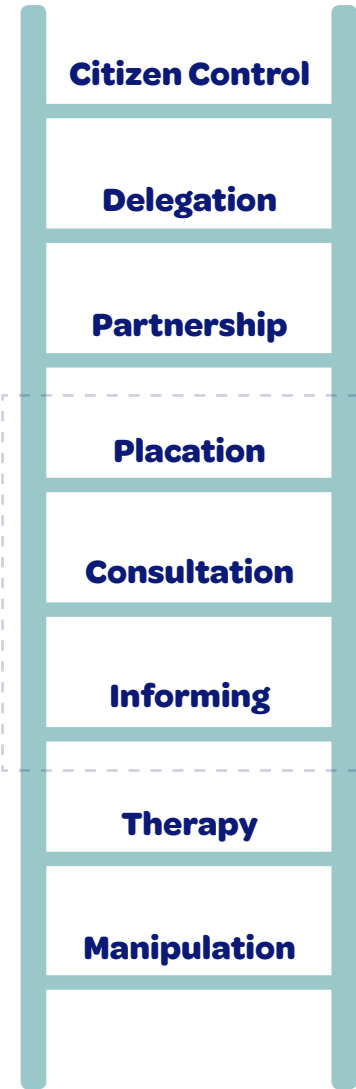
Fig. 10. *Ladder of Citizen Participation visual,* digital image by author. Based on image www.citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html, 9 September 2021.

Liquid Government

Liquid Government hopes to "leverage the wisdom of ordinary citizens to make well-crafted policies that the public supports... it is designed not to replace standard representative government but to compliment it" (Rashbrooke 269).
It is a speculative model of governance that places higher value on the participation and deliberation of citizens within existing civic processes and institutions.

Rashbrooke addresses a core criticism of the Liquid Government model, that it privileges "a hyper-rational discussion that comes most naturally to the well educated.But that misunderstands modern deliberation, where storytelling, personal narrative and other forms of communication are increasingly valued" (271). This notion has been core to the development of *Public Matters 2.0*. After sitting in on select committee proceedings, including the presentation of oral submissions, I saw firsthand the reactions of the committee members to the lived experiences of the general public and how their perspectives were respected. The narratives of how proposed legislation could impact citizens reinforced the need for a tool like *Public Matters* which could help many people better communicate with Parliament in ways that have the potential to alter the development of legislation for the better.

Group collective intelligence

A Harvard study explored the idea of 'group collective intelligence' as something that is not directly connected to the perceived intelligence levels of distinct individuals within the group. It posits that the various mental tools leveraged by individuals in a group setting can make that group of less informed citizens more adept at problem solving than a smaller group of experts who leverage similar cognitive tools given a more homogenous approach to the problem at hand (Landemore 6).

Political discussion, especially through digital platforms, has been shown in many cases to contribute to the construction of echo chambers (wherein individuals do not actually need to engage with people who share views that are in opposition to their own and can easily seek out people who share the same views as they do — further polarising the political spectrum in their doing so). They can also lead to unproductive discourse, direct political discourse online has been seen to only be productive when moderated (Lopesi 7).

The theory of group collective intelligence signals a departure from the work done in *Public Matters 1.0* which focused solely on single user responses to a bill and its content. This perspective echoed notions of aggregative democracy (a group of individual opinions collated will offer up the perspective of the majority, considered within that structure to be 'correct') but did not account for the potential of group collective intelligence. *Public Matters 2.0* leverages a less direct version of discourse that enables users to view (if they elect to) a snapshot of how other people responded to the same questions, to allow them to situate themselves within a context broader than their own experiences.

Considerations

It has been shown that digital civic applications work best when coupled with real world engagement. Next steps for *Public Matters* should establish the extent of these interventions for optimum success — the balance between promotion offline versus facilitated in-person programmes or other more detailed offerings etc.

Critical reflection on context scan

The literature review was a significant and valuable part of this project. The research captures the context of civic engagement in Aotearoa and the potential of digital civic interventions to bring the general public better into the conversations being had on their behalf.

Process

A note on the Parliament website

To put in an official submission to parliament, a submitter needs to engage with the parliamentary website. To be as successful as possible *Public Matters 2.0* should engage with this website well and make the handover as seamless as possible. Initially some elements of the parliamentary site were echoed in the early test versions of *Public Matters 2.0* to foster familiarity but it became clear the two could act well together without the latter being a facsimile. Analysis of the existing parliamentary process also allowed some information to be removed from the scope of the project as it would lead to duplication. For example, the parliament site details information necessary for giving an in-person submission, which could then be removed from the education and submission formatting aspects of *Public Matters 2.0*.
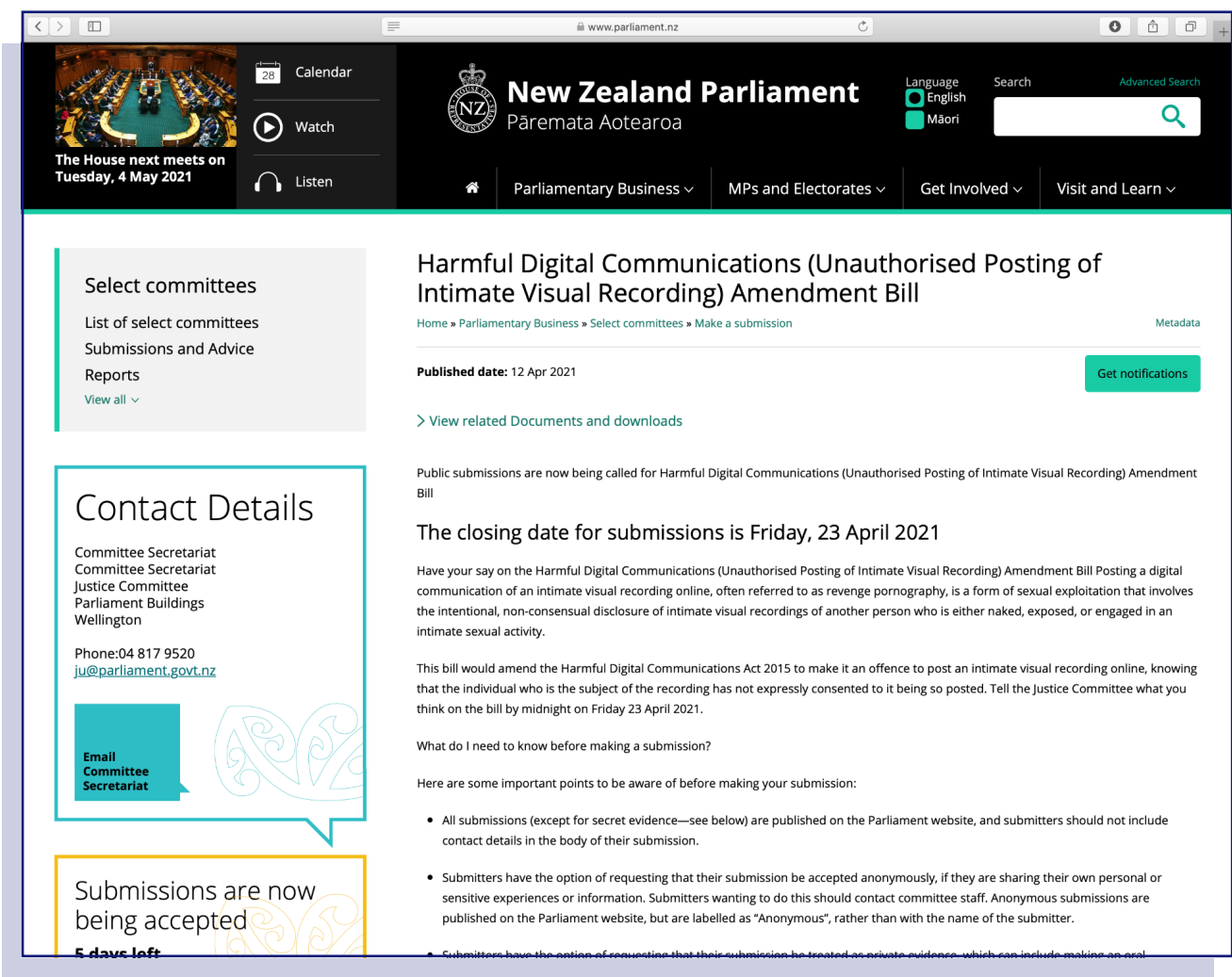
Fig. 11. *Submission page screenshot,* digital screenshot by author. New Zealand Parliament, 12 April 2020, www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/make-a-submission/document/53SCJU_SCF_BILL_99360/harmful-digital-communications-unauthorised-posting-of. Accessed 18 April 2021.

Critical reflection on first wireframe tests

Testing was significant to the development of *Public Matters 2.0.* Ten users (some within the audience group and others with a parliamentary perspective) were tested on an ad hoc basis. Tests of the first version of wireframes constructed provided significant insights and the removal of some functionalities. The inclusion of 'favourability indicators' (FI) brought through from *Public Matters 1.0* seemed to take user precedence. They prioritised engagement with those simpler metrics rather than engaging with the text fields which populate the submission, with the intention of the FI to act as a thought exercise, allowing users to establish their position before formalising that notion in text. Expanded testing would be key to further development of the tool.
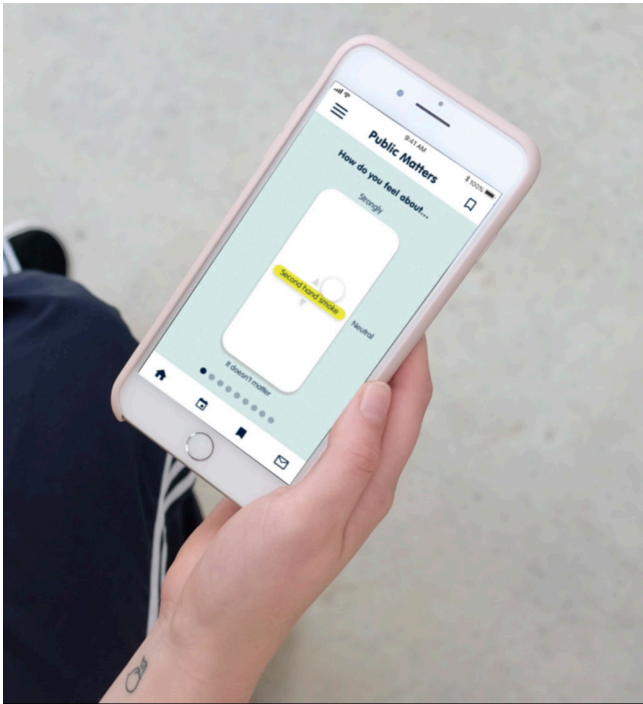
Fig. 12. *Public Matters 1.0 Favouriability indicator,* digital image by author, 2019.
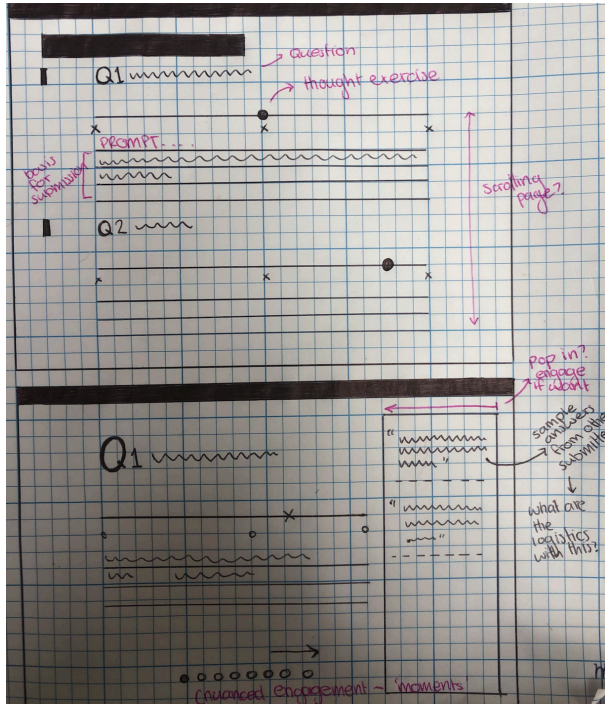
Fig. 13. *Public Matters 2.0 text ideation,* workbook photograph by author, 2021.

Based on these insights, an amended iteration was tested which placed more focus on prompted text functionality taking cues from precedent *Back of a Napkin*, acknowledging that to create a written submission, one must actually participate in the writing. The continued inclusion of the feedback loop was noted as significant. Users signalled that they would be most interested in knowing changes recommended by the Select Committee, changes picked up by the broader House of Representatives and either the date of Royal Assent or the point at which the progress of the bill terminated if unsuccessful, with less focus on the bill's transitions through other intermediary stages. These insights established the criteria for the updated feedback loop. More exploration and testing is recommended in a time accurate way, to ascertain whether this approach is the most appropriate.

Navigation testing

Multiple avenues for the information architecture were explored in early stage Lo-Fi testing, these included:

1. Bills are accessible in one go: with the intention that perhaps users come across bills they weren't aware of but then felt interested to know more?

2. Bills grouped in more deliberate categories: for ease of access and to allow users to respond to multiple bills in similar areas one after another?

3. Bills broken into relevant committee groupings: potentially adding to a greater understanding of parliamentary process?
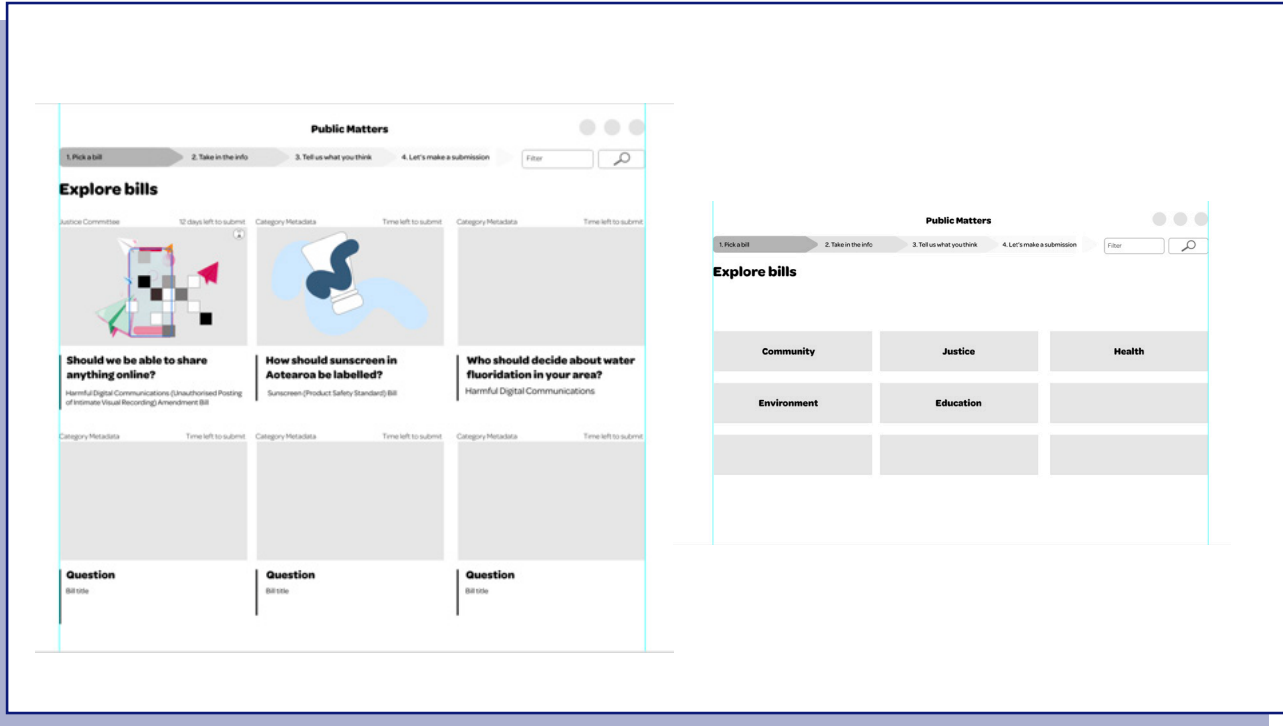
Fig. 14. *Public Matters 2.0 structure ideation,* digital compilation by author, 2021.

Users liked the bills broken down into categories but questioned how intuitive the categories would be for a broad range of users (perception of what should and should not be included in broad terms like 'community' for example). Similarly it was noted that there was too much of a knowledge gap to easily navigate the bills broken down by select committee and could exasperate users rather than inform. There was general consensus that bills were most accessible when presented all together with the potential to search (a combination feature from the category based bill navigation) for those users with a more direct idea of what they were aiming to submit on.

Engagement with individuals within the Office of the Clerk provided the insight that sometimes legislation is grouped, to form a push related to a particular opportunity or issue — meaning a select committee may be considering a number of bills simultaneously that respond to the same subject. It was also noted that engagement patterns often saw an increase in submissions in the final days, before public consultation closed. These insights informed the proposal that bills be shown together on the same screen, accessible but grouped within their select committees, which would allow for context to be imparted about the committees generally and accommodate for the introduction of ad hoc select committees.

The default order for content would be that submissions with the least amount of time available would be presented first (in cases where two select committees had bills with the same closing date, the order would default to alphabetical between the two or more committees). This overall structure intends to bolster public trust in Parliament as it presents bills with a focus on transparency and equipping users with as much time as they can to formulate a submission, if they so choose.

Public Matters 2.0 leverages a search option for users who have a better idea of what they are searching for but exploration into more guided filters should be undertaken in the further development of the tool. It is important to note that not all select committees will have bills open for submission at any given time so the structure of this page will ebb and flow. Testing is required to assess how appropriate this structure is over a period of time where bills are coming in and out of select committees.

Fig. 15. *Public Matters 2.0 Current bills page,* digital image by author, 2021.

Public Matters 2.0 includes potential input for a holistic variant of demographic data capture. Engagement with Katherine Farmer, Senior Business Analyst within the Office of the Clerk informed this inclusion. She highlighted the significance of demographic information for decision making within Parliament and the potential for some data capture to influence how Parliament works with groups seen to be disengaged.
There are currently no demographic standards apart from name and contact email associated with putting in a submission. It is important to note that the significance placed on statistics and standardised demographic information by governing bodies has been shown to lower nuanced trust in civic institutions as its over reliance can lead to people feeling as though civic institutions paint with a broad brush (McMeeking 118).

Given this tension, *Public Matters 2.0* takes a holistic approach to capturing information about the individual. The process is entirely voluntary and adds a small section to the submission that situates the submitter and their perspective within a context of their own sharing. *Public Matters 2.0* highlights general demographic information and the purpose that it may serve in allowing the select committee to better assess gaps in their engagement but does not place any restrictions on the user as to the information they share. Age, whakapapa and any information an individual feels comfortable sharing, are welcome.

Critical reflection on second wireframe tests

Testing the inclusion of a demographic element was the most significant element of these user tests. It included interesting discussions about the kind of information people would be willing to share with Parliament and whether that information was unique to each bill. Users signalled that the information they were most likely to share about themselves was directly related to their personal connection to a bill.
This insight repositioned the demographic information capture from something that sat separately from the submission (in a section more akin to a user profile or account etc) to existing on a submission-by-submission basis. In response to this insight a simple open text field was included in the submission formatting page. At this point the user can see their full submission and has the opportunity to offer up any personal information if they see fit. This allows for different information to be offered up on a submission-by-submission basis or not at all. The choice rests with the individual.

Fig. 16. *Public Matters 2.0 demographic data early test,* digital image by author, 2021.

At this stage of testing, developments were also made to the structure of the post-content questions that create the templated submission. Initially taking cues from the submissions creation structure, the parliament website uses two text fields — one for comments and the other for recommendations. The structure of questions in *Public Matters 2.0* first asked users to organise the key elements of a bill into states of agreement, disagreement and neutrality — grouping them into an order for questions and the structure of the submission with neutral elements omitted for efficiency. Discussion with individuals within the Office of the Clerk illuminated that a clause-by-clause approach (responding to the bill's elements in the same order they are presented in the legislation) would be the most appropriate structure for those who read submissions within parliament, allowing them to most easily pull relevant information. Given the scope of this project and its speculative success lying in part with its ability to be feasibly engaged with by Parliament itself as much as by the public, this shift to a clause-by-clause approach was used in the updated prototype. There is future work to be done to properly assess if this approach is most appropriate.
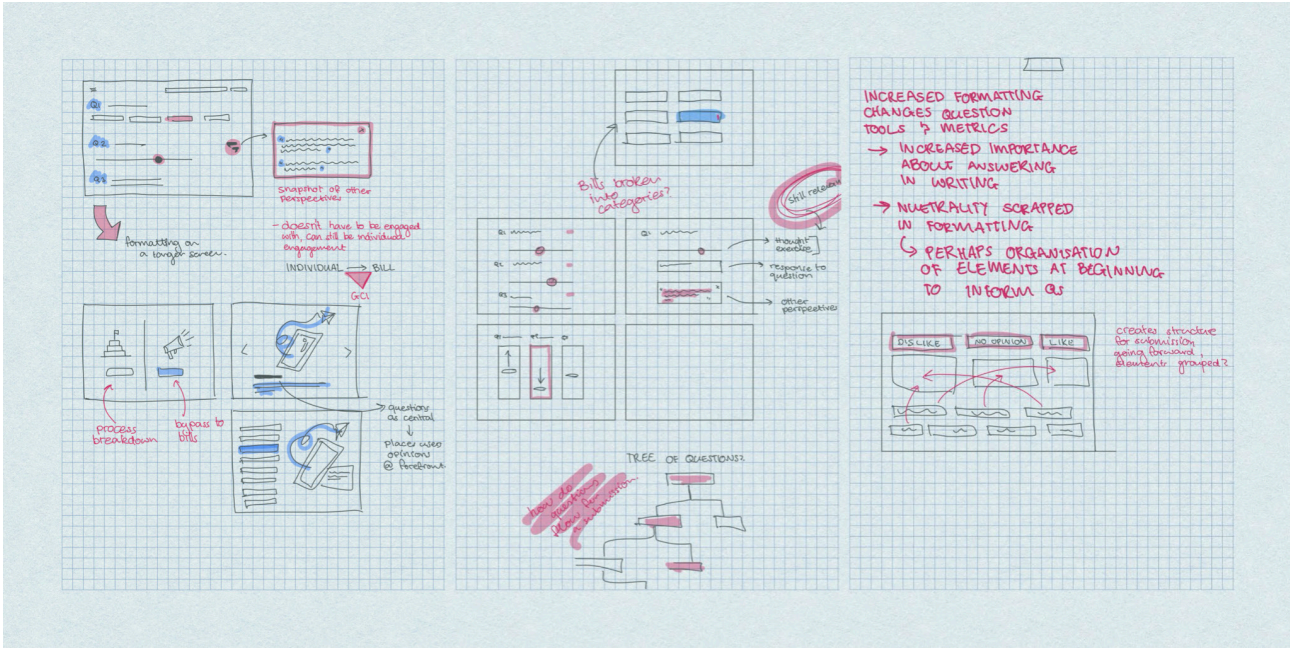
Fig. 17. *Public Matters 2.0 question organisation exploration,* digital image by author, 2021.

Fig. 18. *Public Matters 2.0 question organisation exploration p2,* digital image by author, 2021.

At this stage of development the speculative prototype ordered questions on how favourably different elements of the bill were seen by the user. Allowing them to express their collective opinions to elements at once rather than a clause-by-clause approach. This approach was replaced due to testing and input from the Office of the Clerk.

Engagement with individuals within the Office of the Clerk during this time also provided the insight that the way that select committees operate can be highly varied. Select committees are able to publish and release to the public accepted submissions as they see fit. Some will do this while submissions are still active on a rolling basis, while in other cases all submissions will be released together after the closing date for submissions. This posed an interesting problem for the proposed structure of *Public Matters 2.0*.

Based on my research into group collective intelligence, it had been initially posited that accepted submissions that used *Public Matters 2.0* in their construction would be used to pull a random sample of answers a user could leverage to contextualise their experience and compare their perspective to others. It is significant that these submissions be accepted by Parliament to mitigate any issues around submissions that are inappropriate (particularly as it relates to issues of natural justice) or that are deemed irrelevant. If submissions are not released publicly until the submission date is closed there can be no 'endorsed' submissions to pull from.

It is the perspective of this project that publishing accepted submissions on a rolling basis is a process all select committees should work towards for a tool like *Public Matters* to be successful. Parliament has distinct engagement channels that could be leveraged in the case of a lack of submissions to draw from, directing users to opportunities for broader contextual understanding. An example of this is the use of the Parliament Instagram account to facilitate discussion about the Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill. Linking out to such channels may provide stop gap solutions to a lack of content on the *Public Matters* tool, however, may also create inconsistent user experiences impacting sustained engagement. This project proposes that keeping the structure of *Public Matters* somewhat contained offers individuals the greatest experience, and any lack of content can act as an influencing factor upon Select committees to function in a uniform way. Expanded testing is needed to assess whether this approach is feasible.
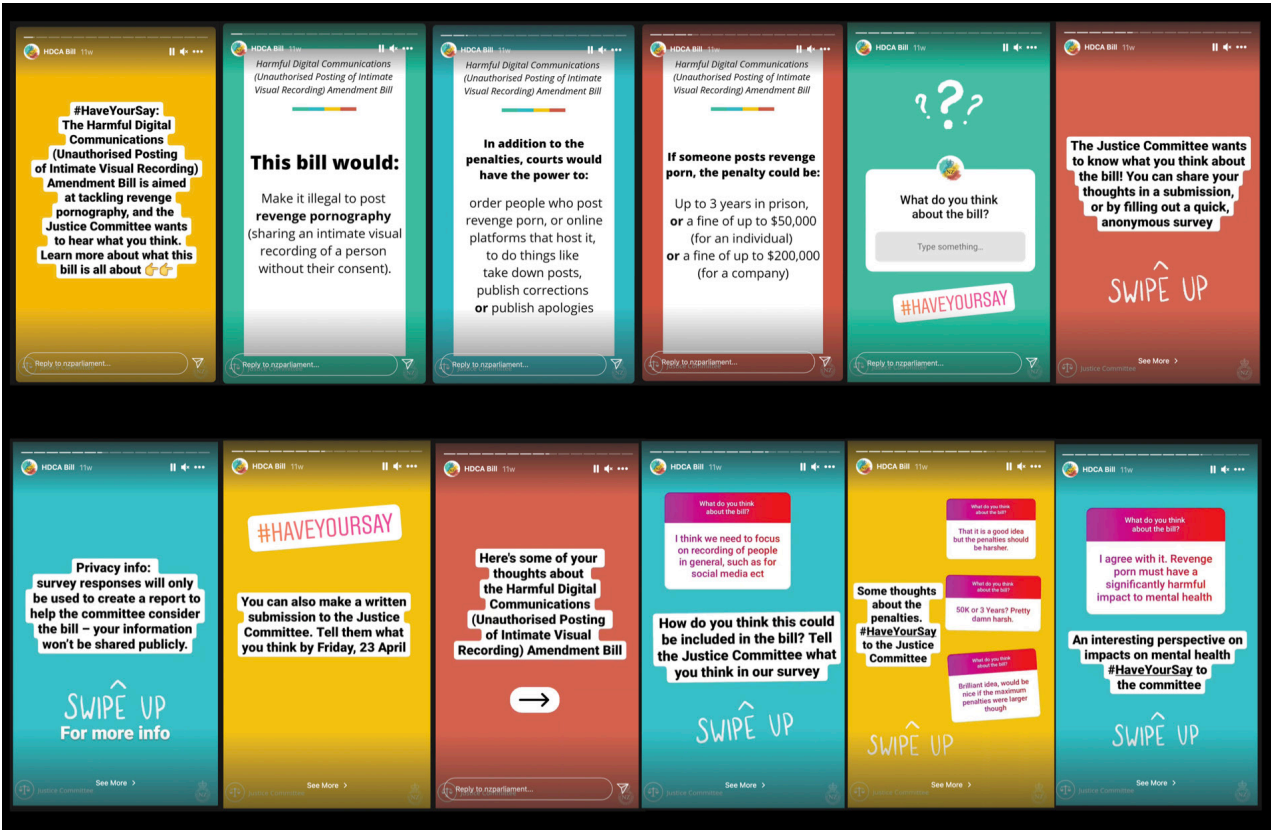
Fig. 19. Parliament instagram story compilation, digital compilation by author. New Zealand Parliament, 2021, www.instagram.com/nzparliament/. Acessed 2 July 2021.

Speculative prototype

This section discusses key screens from the *Public Matters 2.0* prototype and design decisions that influenced its construction.

Public Matters is introduced to users with two avenues for engagement. Those who feel comfortable are able to navigate straight to content about individual bills whereas those who are less confident are able to engage with a simple education piece. This breaks down the stages it takes to construct and implement legislation, with a focus on the select committee stage. This education piece is focused to keep the user informed about the scope and functionality of *Public Matters* as a tool, without duplicating excessively what is detailed on official channels such as the Parliament website. The education piece of *Public Matters 2.0* is split out from the content function to best cater for different user needs. This aims to mitigate frustration some users may feel if they are automatically taken through a process they do not deem to be necessary.

Fig.20. *Public Matters 2.0 intro screen,* digital image by author, 2021.
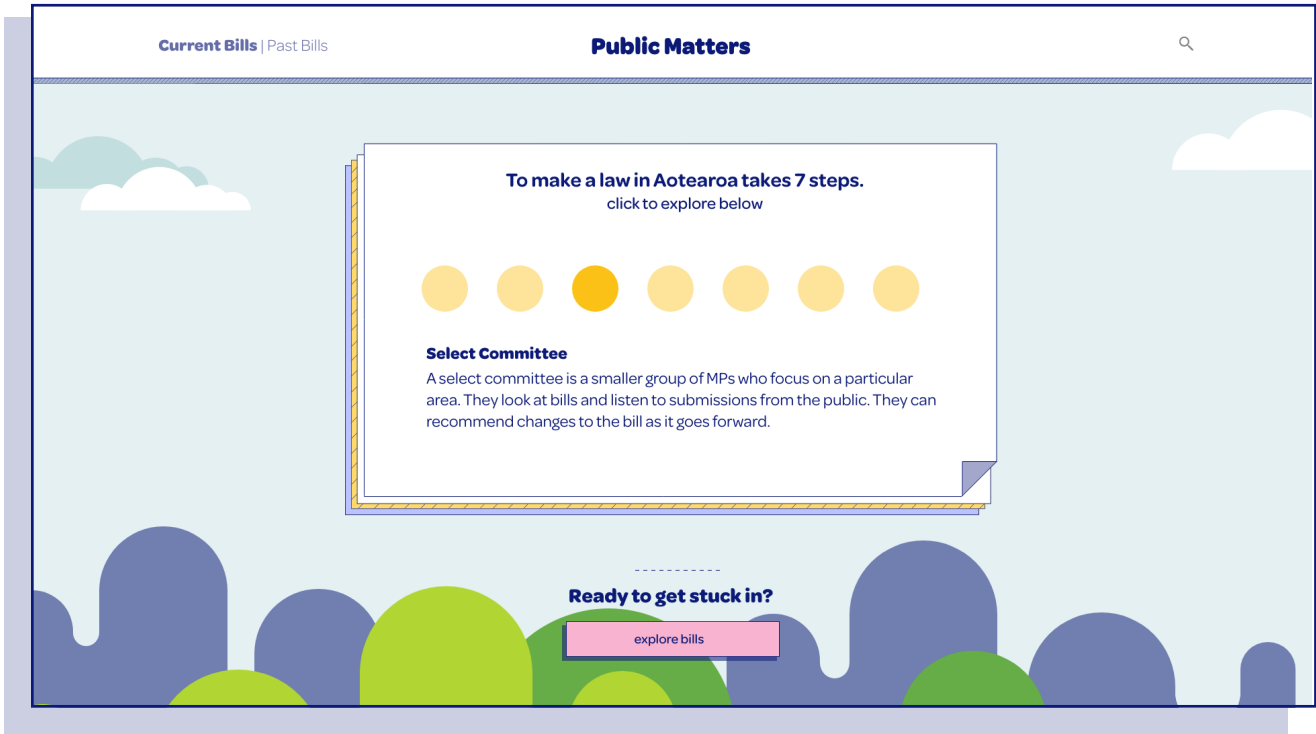
Fig. 21. *Public Matters 2.0 education screen,* digital image by author, 2021.

Current bills

Bills available for submission are shown on a single screen, to avoid unnecessary layers to the tool. They are grouped by select committee, with some background information about the focus of the committee available to contextualise the bills. Priority on the page is given to bills with the lowest time remaining for submission and the number of days to make a submission is highlighted as key metadata for each bill. Users can break out of this formatting, choosing to view bills with a focus on time remaining but this is not set as the default state.

Bills are introduced with a plain language question posed directly to the user which addresses the key focus of the bill. The official title of the bill sits as a subheading, given less significance. The use of a question that addresses the individual directly intends to reinforce that the user is appropriately equipped to respond to the bill, that their input on the nature of the bill is valid and that they should feel confident in doing so through such a channel. It also seeks to mitigate confusion between bills, for example the different variants of end of life choice bills that have been introduced throughout parliamentary terms.

Health Committee
The Health Committee looks at business related to the health of people in Aotearoa

3 days left

Should recreational drug testing be legal in Aotearoa?
Drug and Substance Checking Legislation Bill (No 2)

4 days left

How should we manage our water services?
Water Services Bill

Fig. 22. *Public Matters 2.0 close up of bill formatting,* digital image by author, 2021.

Bill content

Once a user has selected a bill they want to know more about or submit on, they are taken through a plain language breakdown of the key elements of the bill. This element-by-element approach is mirrored later in the tool to construct a submission. Engaging in this way intends to build a strong understanding of the elements of the bill as users focus on single pieces of information at a time. This breakdown leverages plain language and simple visual cues that seek to aid in a user's understanding without overly complicating or overwhelming the user.

Current Bills | Past Bills   **Public Matters**

Explore bills | **Harmful Digital Communication bill**

Should we be able to share anything online?   3 days left
Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill

Introduction
At the moment it is only an offence to share an intimate visual recording (in this case a video or photo) if it can be proved that the person who shares the recording meant to cause harm by sharing it, and that harm was caused. This bill would change that.

Fig. 23. *Public Matters 2.0 current bills screen,* digital image by author, 2021.

Submission creation

Following the content breakdown of the bill the user is guided through a text-focused series of interventions that seek to build out a submission template, aiding the user as much as possible. Initial questions focus on the overall goals of the bill followed by prompts about each of the key elements in the bill, aiding in the construction of a nuanced submission that addresses all elements of the bill. Free text fields with prompts form the basis for this, preceded by general questions that establish the tone and ensure that the final populated submission resulting at the end of the process flows well. Standardised options are offered to make the tool as simple to use as possible, and the user has the ability to override and infil their own text if appropriate.

Public Matters 2.0 leverages a standardised approach to questions asking users to respond to the bill element-by-element. In this format they signal whether or not they agree with each aspect and unpack why. This intends to meet the needs of the broadest range of bills with relative ease. Select Committees should consider constructing more bespoke questions to sit alongside the plain language breakdown of the bill. This could potentially eventuate in more useful and meaningfully focused submissions. This area of the project requires more research and testing, with a particular focus on the timescale of engagement (whether users will return time and time again to a standardised set of questions which pull at the key elements of a bill or would favour more tailored questions).

Users are able to look at snapshots of how others have responded to the same questions to contextualise themselves within a broader group, if they choose. These snapshots are pulled from accepted submissions. This is not a mandatory function of the tool and engagement is entirely voluntary. The intention of leveraging group collective intelligence is that it will aid in the construction of considered submissions, in which the user is able to either address the concerns of others, strengthening their own position or perhaps be made aware of perspectives they had not considered, which could alter the nature of their own submission.
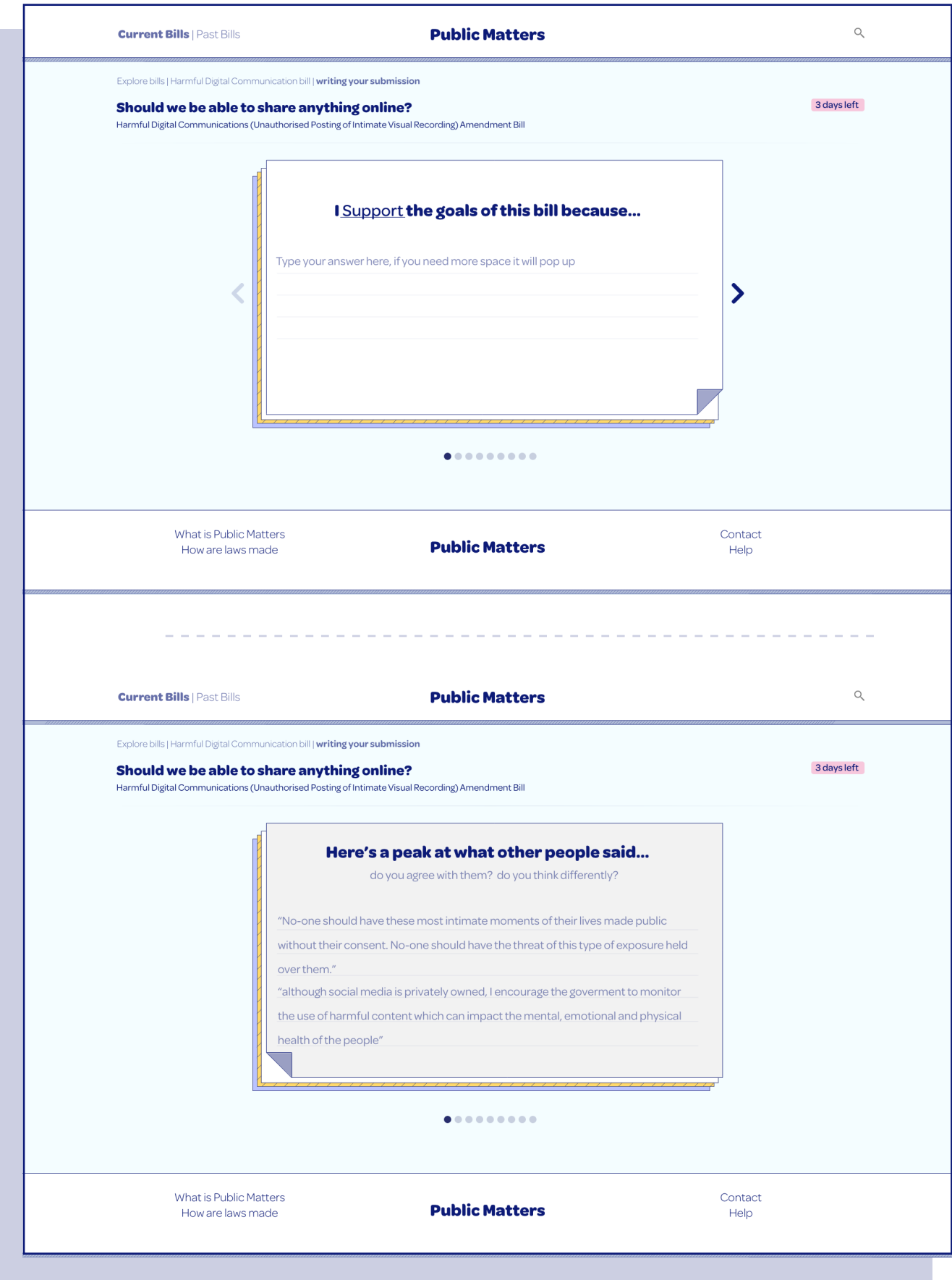
Fig. 24. *Public Matters 2.0 alternate answers screens compiled,* digital image by author, 2021.

Formatting

After a user has navigated and infilled all text prompts, they are directed to an editing screen which allows them to assess their answers as a pre-populated submission, editing where needed (for natural flow etc) to make the submission final. The decision to include in tool formatting intends to mitigate any barriers a user may have constructing a fully formatted submission. *Public Matters 1.0* did not include such a focus on formatting and may have inadvertently created a barrier to engagement for users. It is on this screen that the reconfigured demographic data functionality now rests. Simply offering users the opportunity to infill the submission introduction with any information they feel is relevant to share. As with other functionality on *Public Matters,* they are able to opt out easily by leaving that text field blank. Once happy with their editing, users are directed to download a copy of their submission, before being directed to the specific submission page for that bill to make sure they do not submit in the wrong place.

Parliament website

It is at this point that *Public Matters* hands over to the Parliament website for the user to actually input their submission. This handover is made as simple as possible as the user is directed to the exact page to make their submission and content duplication is avoided.

Fig. 25. *Public Matters 2.0 formatting screen,* digital image by author, 2021.

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Pāremata Aotearoa

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Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill

Home » Parliamentary Business » Select committees » Make a submission   Metadata

Published date: 12 Apr 2021

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Public submissions are now being called for Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill

The closing date for submissions is Friday, 23 April 2021

Have your say on the Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill Posting a digital communication of an intimate visual recording online, often referred to as revenge pornography, is a form of sexual exploitation that involves the intentional, non-consensual disclosure of intimate visual recordings of another person who is either naked, exposed, or engaged in an intimate sexual activity.

This bill would amend the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 to make it an offence to post an intimate visual recording online, knowing that the individual who is the subject of the recording has not expressly consented to it being so posted. Tell the Justice Committee what you think on the bill by midnight on Friday 23 April 2021.

What do I need to know before making a submission?

Here are some important points to be aware of before making your submission:

- All submissions (except for secret evidence—see below) are published on the Parliament website, and submitters should not include contact details in the body of their submission.

- Submitters have the option of requesting that their submission be accepted anonymously, if they are sharing their own personal or sensitive experiences or information. Submitters wanting to do this should contact committee staff. Anonymous submissions are published on the Parliament website, but are labelled as "Anonymous", rather than with the name of the submitter.

- Submitters have the option of requesting that their submission be treated as private evidence, which can include making an oral submission in private. Submitters wanting to do this should contact committee staff.

- Submitters have the option of requesting that their submission be treated as secret evidence, which is never publicly released and cannot be discussed by MPs outside the committee room. The test for secret evidence is a high one and submitters should contact committee staff to discuss this option.

- If a submission contains an allegation that may seriously damage the reputation of a person who is named or can be identified based on information in the submission, the committee must consider how to handle the submission. This can include giving the affected person a right of response. The committee is keen to hear experiences of unauthorised posting of intimate recordings and how this needs to be addressed, and to do so in a way that is not re-traumatising to victims. It also, however, needs to balance this with the principles of natural justice. Please contact committee staff to discuss your submission if you have any concerns about this.

- Please note committees cannot inquire into allegations of criminal wrong-doing against a person that can be identified, as this is the role of the courts. Please contact committee staff to discuss your submission if it may contain such an allegation.

If you have any questions about your submission or the submission process please contact the Committee Staff through the contact details provided on this page.

I am ready to make my submission

Contact Details

Committee Secretariat
Committee Secretariat
Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Phone:04 817 9520
ju@parliament.govt.nz

Email Committee Secretariat

Submissions are now being accepted

5 days left
Closing date: 23 Apr 2021 NZ Time

Fig. 26. *Submissions introduction screenshot,* screenshot of website. New Zealand Parliament, 2021, www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_99360/harmful-digital-communications-unauthorised-posting-of. Acessed 18th April 2021.

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Your information is secure

1. Your Details   2. Your Submission   3. Review & Submit

Reset   Print
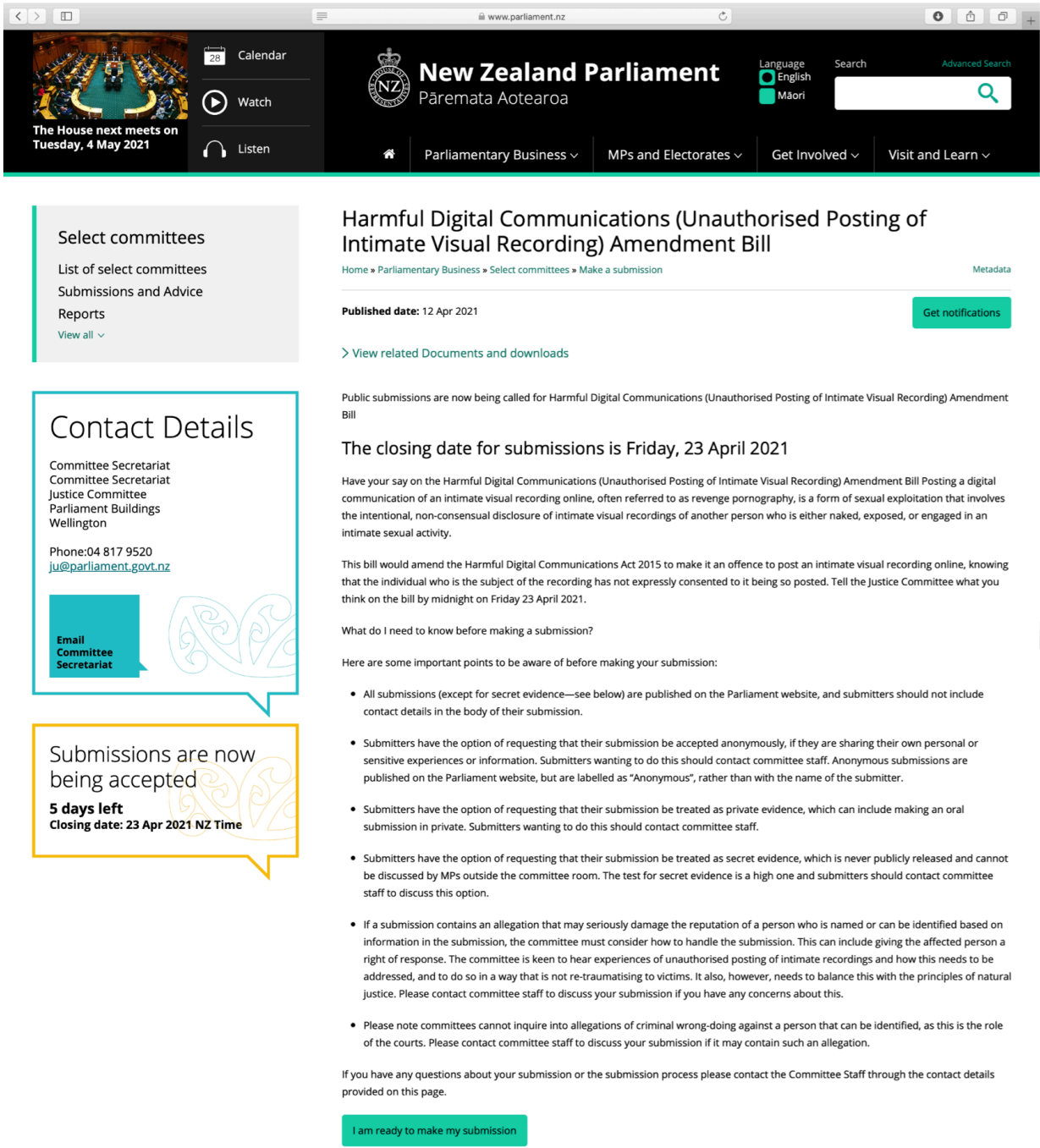
Contact Details

Committee Secretariat
Committee Secretariat
Justice Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Phone:04 817 9520
ju@parliament.govt.nz

Email Committee Secretariat

Submissions are now being accepted

5 days left
Closing date: 23 Apr 2021 NZ Time

✓ You are submitting as an individual: emma forde
✓ You do not wish to make an oral submission to the committee

Your submission

For more information about completing an online submission, please read our submission help pages. Links to the help pages are available on the "Your Details Tab" page introduction section.

Have your say and influence the laws passed by Parliament. Upload your submission or make a submission using the form below. You can also upload supporting material using the Upload A Submission functions.

⚠ **IMPORTANT NOTE:**
Any personal information (including contact details) that you include in the text or other content of your online submission and/or in uploaded files will be published to the Parliament website (and available to public search engines) as part of your submission. Your submission will be published under your name. All contact details entered on the previous page will not be published.

Upload a submission

Please note: File types accepted are .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .TXT The maximum number of files uploaded per submission is 20. The maximum size for individual files is 20 MB, and the total combined file size is 30 MB.

📄 Choose a file to upload

Tick any files you want to remove and click "Remove selected file".

Fig. 27. *Submissions upload screenshot,* screenshot of website. New Zealand Parliament, 2021, www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_99360/harmful-digital-communications-unauthorised-posting-of. Acessed 18th April 2021.
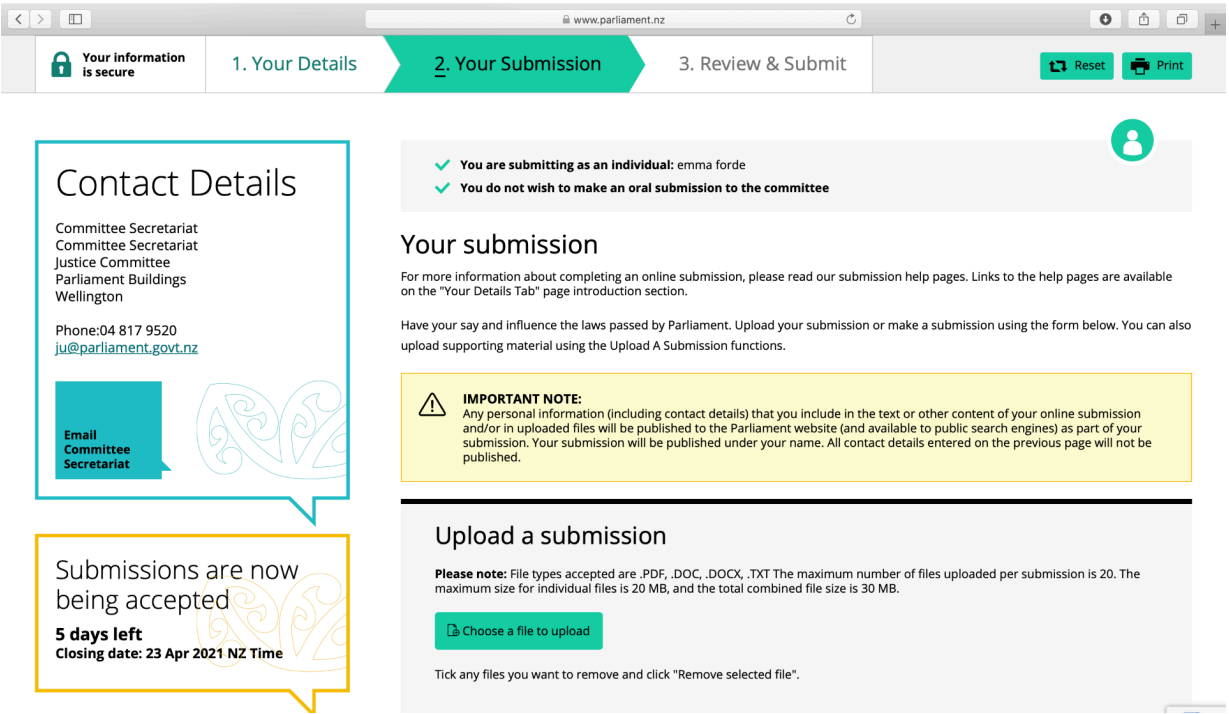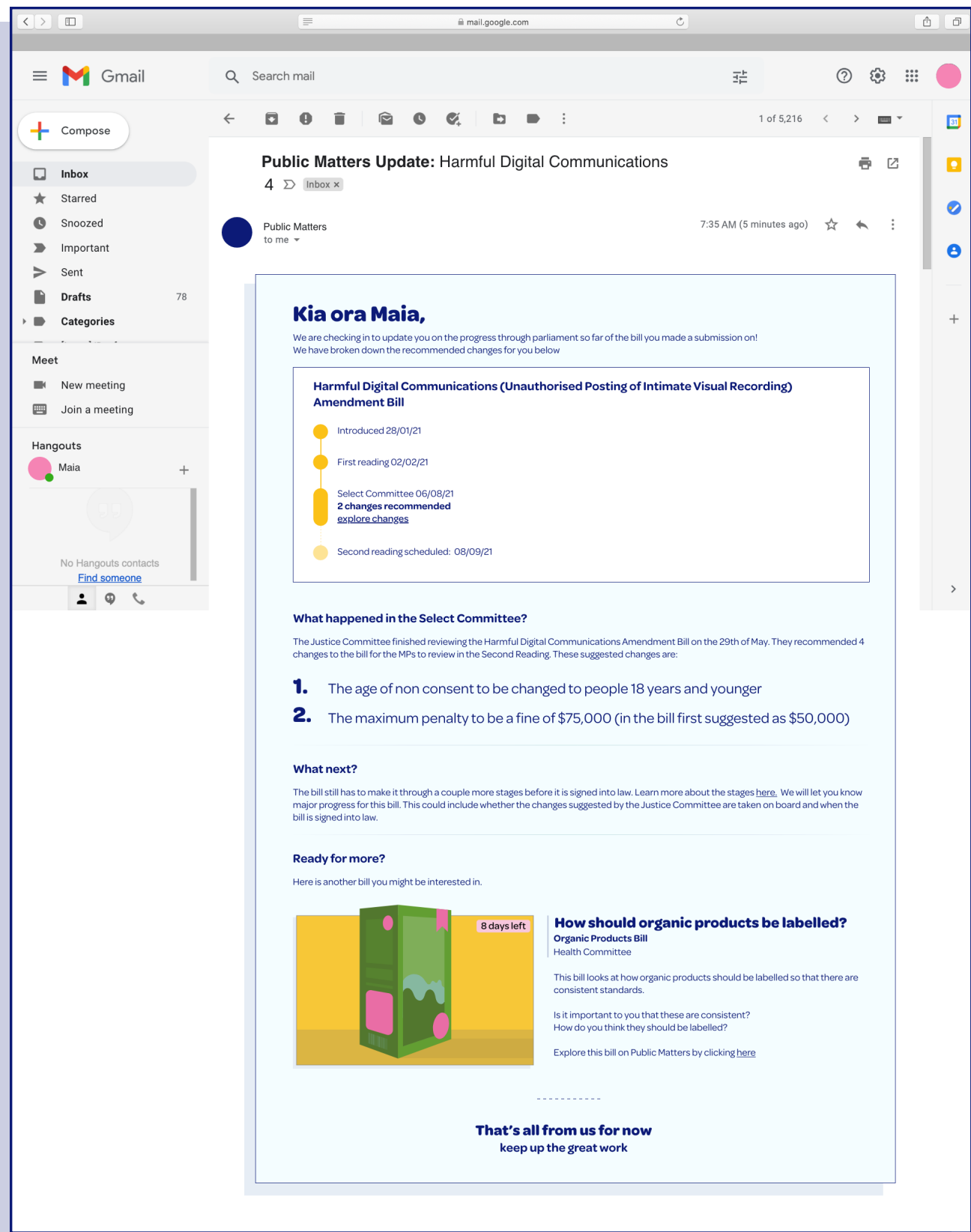
Public Matters

Explore past bills

Explore past bills

Bills still in Parliament

These Bills are still going through Parliament, keep up to date with their journeys here.

2nd reading

Committee of the whole house

Should we be able to share anything online?

Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill

See timeline ⌃

How should sunscreen be regulated?

Sunscreen (Product Safety Standard) Bill

See timeline ⌄

Past bills

All of these bills have finished their journey through Parliament. You can learn about their content as well as their journey.

They are organised by most recently closed but you can search for a particular bill or explore by Select Committee

- Introduced 28/01/21
- First reading 02/02/21
- Select Committee 06/08/21
  2 changes recommended
  explore changes
- Second reading 08/09/2021
- Committee of the Whole House

Take a closer look →

passed 30/08/21

How should we manage our water services?

Water Services Bill

See timeline ⌄

How should organic products be labelled?

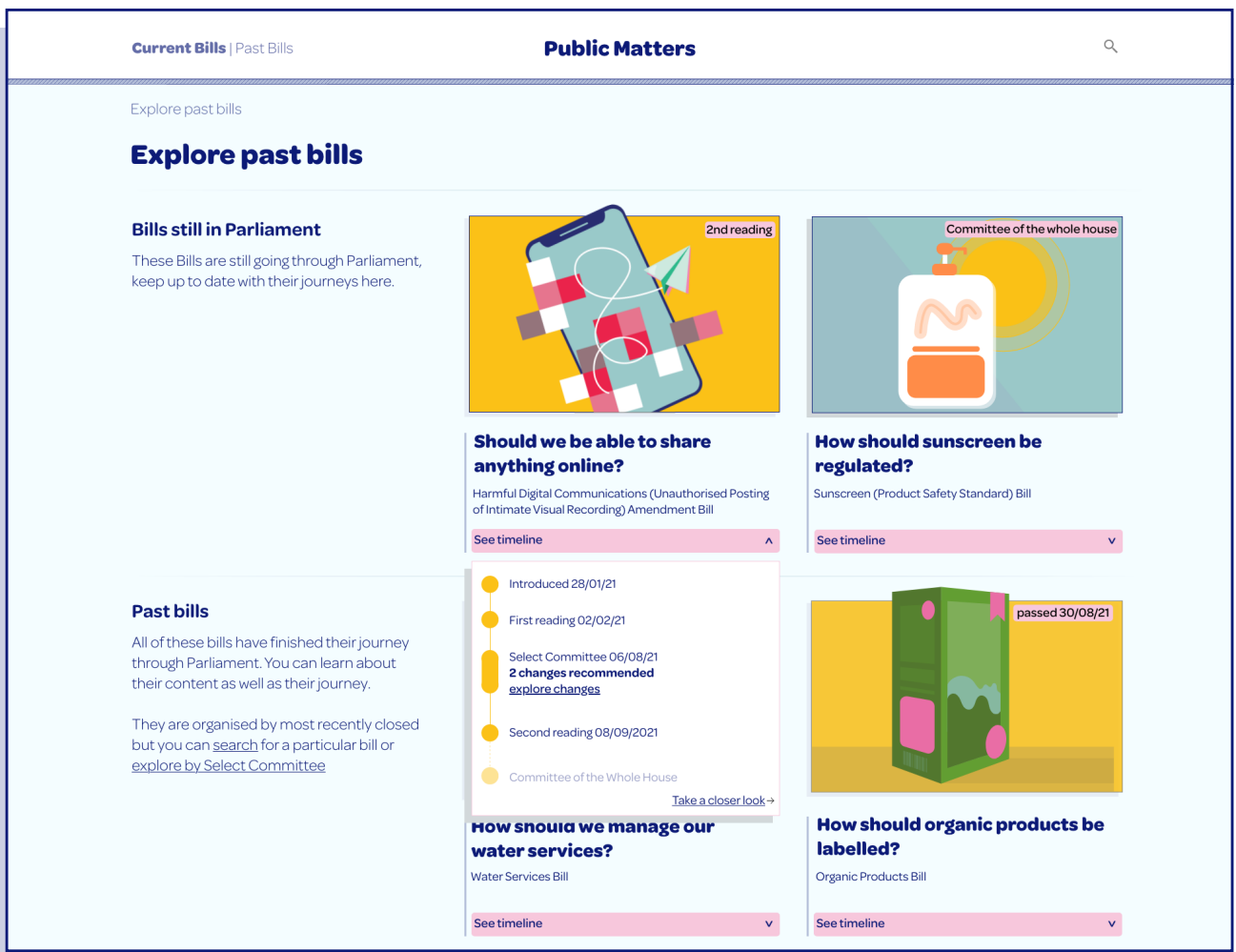Organic Products Bill

See timeline ⌄

Fig. 29. *Past bills page,* digital image by author, 2021.

Feedback loop

For bills that a user submits on, they are able to opt into a feedback loop about the progress and any proposed changes to the bill as it develops. This feedback loop in this prototype defaults to email to nudge users but more exploration should be done into more diverse feedback avenues. The intention of a feedback loop is to foster transparency and increase legitimacy of decisions made, allowing people to understand the process better and come back to submit on other bills even when their suggestions are not necessarily implemented for past bills. Future exploration with users should explore whether this model is the preferred structure.

Once a bill is no longer open for submission, its place within *Public Matters* shifts to sit with 'Past bills.' This area acts as a repository of bill content and a record of the feedback loop for individual bills. This intends to strengthen trust and legitimacy in civic decisions, as users are able to access full records of when bills are amended based on feedback received and reinforce the potential of citizen engagement with current or future bills.

Gmail

Search mail

Compose

Inbox
Starred
Snoozed
Important
Sent
Drafts   78
Categories

Meet
New meeting
Join a meeting

Hangouts
Maia

No Hangouts contacts
Find someone

Public Matters Update: Harmful Digital Communications

4   Inbox ×

1 of 5,216

Public Matters   7:35 AM (5 minutes ago)
to me

Kia ora Maia,

We are checking in to update you on the progress through parliament so far of the bill you made a submission on!
We have broken down the recommended changes for you below

Harmful Digital Communications (Unauthorised Posting of Intimate Visual Recording) Amendment Bill

- Introduced 28/01/21
- First reading 02/02/21
- Select Committee 06/08/21
  2 changes recommended
  explore changes
- Second reading scheduled: 08/09/21

What happened in the Select Committee?

The Justice Committee finished reviewing the Harmful Digital Communications Amendment Bill on the 29th of May. They recommended 4 changes to the bill for the MPs to review in the Second Reading. These suggested changes are:

1. The age of non consent to be changed to people 18 years and younger

2. The maximum penalty to be a fine of $75,000 (in the bill first suggested as $50,000)

What next?

The bill still has to make it through a couple more stages before it is signed into law. Learn more about the stages here. We will let you know major progress for this bill. This could include whether the changes suggested by the Justice Committee are taken on board and when the bill is signed into law.

Ready for more?

Here is another bill you might be interested in.

8 days left

How should organic products be labelled?
Organic Products Bill
Health Committee

This bill looks at how organic products should be labelled so that there are consistent standards.

Is it important to you that these are consistent? How do you think they should be labelled?

Explore this bill on Public Matters by clicking here

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

That's all from us for now
keep up the great work

Fig. 28. *Feedback loop,* digital image by author, 2021.

Who holds the pen?

A question that has been present throughout this project has been: who generates the plain language content? This project posits that plain language content be generated by Parliament at the same time as the initial bill is constructed. Having content come from one source strengthens trust that it is legitimate and accurate, has little additional bias and is in line with its heavy legalese counterpart. It also establishes an element of 'buy-in' on the part of Parliament to ensure appropriate systems and processes that surround the submissions process are enabled to deal with possible increasing engagement from the public. Such a process would ensure the success of the tool and would allow it to be adopted as part of a broader exercise to bring the general public into civic institutions.

Language offerings are significant to consider in relation to content development. As submissions are accepted in Māori it is paramount to explore the most appropriate avenue to respect that within *Public Matters* going forward. This could include exploration into a duplicate tool presented fully in Māori or a cross over approach that better incorporates te reo Māori into the existing *Public Matters* structure. There is also the potential to explore other languages and their potential for accessibility.

Reflection on visual language and UI development

The feeling that engaging with civics is out of reach is entrenched in many ways: from the visual construction of a bill; the way it is formally presented in Parliament; and many other nudges that push everyday New Zealanders further away from understanding and engaging with civics meaningfully.

The development of the speculative exploratory visual system for the *Public Matters 2.0* prototype was informed by the notion that "politics should feel like ourselves but in a different form" as proposed by political science professor Leslie Lipson (144). Next steps for my project include further exploration of the visual language and user interface to confirm performance relative to intent. The tool intends to make users feel confident, stepping away from the prohibitively intellectual tone set by pieces of legislation as they currently stand. The development of a colour palette was constructed with the intent that it be engaging and positive, without being overly political and that it meet accessibility standards set out by digital.govt.nz. The typeface Omnes was leveraged to act in opposition to the rigid formality set by traditional serif fonts (Times) used in bills currently. Bright but simple imagery is used to aid a user in understanding content without over complication, and sets a foundation for a simple style that can be replicated as more content is created.

" **Even in countries where governments are actively seeking to improve citizen dialogue ... the challenge then becomes how to increase citizen contributions without overloading policymakers, so that the contributions can be listened to in a meaningful way.** "

(Queensbury 3)

Conclusion

After exploring the potential a tool like *Public Matters* may have in Aotearoa in the future, it is important to recognise that as a speculative project it cannot be immediately implemented, nor should it be the goal state. There are actions that pre-and postdate the implementation of a tool like *Public Matters* to best continue to advance civic accessibility and engagement with legislative development.

A significant next step for my project is understanding how it sits within the broader environment of civic tools and engagements available to the general public. This includes understanding how users are most likely to reach a tool like *Public Matters* in the first place and the channels that will redirect them back to it for sustained engagement.

Things to enact now

Public Matters 2.0 was built with the tenets of plain language front of mind and has the potential to be readily implemented and integrated into existing civic structures. Plain language versions of bills should be created alongside their legalese heavy counterparts to make the consumption of legislation through the existing parliamentary channels more accessible for people in Aotearoa. From there steps should be taken to test and work towards a more comprehensive tool like that of *Public Matters* that seeks to augment the process at large rather than just bring more accessible language to it.

The structures and processes of select committees should also be considered. A more uniform approach to publishing accepted submissions would aid in upholding a tool like *Public Matters* and setting it up for success, building trust for citizens that they will receive consistent and considered outputs from Parliament, and in turn increasing trust in Parliament.

Where to from here

Public Matters 2.0 builds on it's predecessor
(*Public Matters 1.0*) but remains a speculative look at what
civic participation could look like for young voters in Aotearoa.
Testing on a broader scale and with a timeframe that allows
the assessment of the tools' ability to support continued
engagement across a bill's lifecycle and into the future is key.
Once these returning behaviour patterns and user journeys
are proven or responded to, focus should switch to expanding
the reach of the tool, bringing other groups in Aotearoa in
to mitigate unequal particiaption. Appropriate exploration
into 'real world' interventions that support the work of *Public
Matters* should also be undertaken. These steps are complex
and will require engagement from various different groups, but
are a worthwhile investment in a more open and participatory
civic process, from which everyone in Aotearoa can benefit.

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