

Outline of the issue:

The argument about the social and political issue of lowering the voting age to 16 years old has become an extensive debate in New Zealand. Notably, it has been an issue among the younger generations. The advocacy group, Make It 16 is a non-partisan youth-led campaign advocating to lower the voting age. They argue that current laws restricting people aged 16-17 from voting is a form of discrimination against them under the Bill of Rights. Their court case was based on inconsistencies between the Electoral Act of 1993 and the Local Government Electoral Act of 2001, stating that these documents prevent them from voting and breach the Bill of Rights.

On the side opposed to lowering the voting age is the National Party, notably Nicola Willis. They as a party reached a collective consensus that 18 is the most fitting age for voting and appears that their standing on the issue will not be changing. They have convinced other parties within the government to also back them up with their decision of trying to make sure that this never passes through parliament.

Perspectives, Viewpoints and Responses:

Caeden Tipler's (founding member of the Make it 16 campaign) outlook on making the voting age 16 in New Zealand is a social justice and political perspective because they co-lead the campaign advocating in support of this topic. They also addressed government officials regarding this on the grounds of going against the Bill of Rights Act. They have this outlook on lowering the voting age because they believe that the situations they are debating in parliament negatively affect future generations. They also believe that this is their future being decided they need to hold a voice in what transpires.

Caeden expressed in an address at the youth parliament in 2022 "We're part of tens of thousands of young people who are told we aren't smart enough or informed enough to vote but thousands of us marched in the school strikes and thousands of us signed the petition to ban conversion therapy." Caden values giving voice to young people within a political environment as it gives significance to their voices and further enables them to make impacts that will have a positive effect on their future. Because of this, they responded by going to the Youth Parliament and delivering a speech on this subject. An impact of this is that it influenced Caeden to become involved within the Youth Parliament of New Zealand and was a part of bringing the Make It 16 case to the High and Supreme Courts. The impact of Caden going to the Supreme Court gave them the ruling that showed that not letting 16 and 17-year-olds vote was discrimination. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Makes It 16 and their case.

On the opposing side of this social issue sits the national party, specifically Nicola Willis. Nicola's perspective on decreasing the voting age is political and conservative because her beliefs appeal to a substantial majority of people who are already able to vote in elections. Their belief concerning

lowering the voting age is that 18 is the most appropriate age to vote. In an interview with Newshub Nicola stated "You can't marry at 16, you can't buy alcohol at 16, you can't serve in the army at 16 and I don't think you should be able to vote then either".

Nicola values the current laws and policies that are in place in the New Zealand government. She believes that the way things currently are working well and have no need of changing. The impact of her being publicly opposed to lowering the age of voting is that this compelled other government parties to reject the idea publicly and influence their voters to do the same. As shown in the 2020 poll run by the national party. It showed that 88% of New Zealanders were satisfied with the voting age standing at 18.

In an interview with RNZ Paul Goldsmith spoke person for the national party stated "I'm puzzled that there's a justice system which treats 16- and 17-year-olds very differently, often on human rights grounds, thinks it's discriminatory to not have the vote so the logic doesn't quite follow." As Goldsmith is the spokesperson for the party he is showing the overall thoughts and beliefs of the party as a whole. This statement backs up all of Nicola's previous statements and opinions that she has shared during interviews. It helps her to have created a united front within her party on the issue of lowering the voting age to 16 and showing other parties what side they should be picking. This worked and convinced the ACT party to back up National and David Seymour Leader of the ACT party came out and said "ACT rejects calls to lower the voting age to 16 following the Supreme Court's ruling, we don't want 120,000 more voters who pay no tax voting for lots more spending. "

The Bigger Picture:

The possible implication of Cadens/make it 16 perspectives and action is a larger engagement on political issues by the younger generations. With the lowering of the voting age and Make It 16 being such a large supporter, pushing people to protest, has created a larger engagement of political issues. With this happening, this could change the way politicians are thinking in the future about their approach to politics. They would need to realize they need to cater to younger people as they have a different perspective on what is important such as climate change, gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights. As more young people have the chance to vote policies that would be passed so the policies would benefit them because they would make up a large part of the voting demographic. These issues will come to the spotlight due to younger generations having more votes.

Another probable implication as result of lowering the voting age is potential intergenerational conflict. Intergenerational conflict is when older voters or people of differing opinions feel that their voices are being overshadowed by younger individuals with more political power. The older generation could start to assume that all the new legislation and laws passing through parliament will be guided towards the values and beliefs of the youth. This is currently already happening because of Nicola's actions to keep the voting age eighteen. This is a negative implication because older generations will become disconnected from their youth. As well as priority changes, what is a priority for the older generations e.g. pension or old age health care might not be the younger generations.