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Legislative statement

## **Referendums Framework Bill**

First Reading

March 2025

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Presented to the House of Representatives  
under Standing Orders 272

Hon Paul Goldsmith  
Minister of Justice  
Minister in charge of the bill

## Introduction

1. The Referendums Framework Bill is a generic Bill which establishes a single set of legislative provisions to govern the conduct of referendums held alongside either the first or second general election following its enactment.

## Overview and provisions of Bill

2. The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the conduct of one or more referendum, if held, at either of the next two general elections following enactment.
3. The Bill provides for an Order in Council to be promulgated to declare a referendum to be a referendum for the purposes of the Bill, and to set out the timing of the referendum.
4. The Bill largely reproduces the same legislative framework for the conduct of referendums as will apply to the conduct of the general election. This includes provisions concerning the following:
  - a. electoral officers and polling places:
  - b. eligibility to vote in a referendum:
  - c. the form of the referendum voting paper:
  - d. counting and declaring votes:
  - e. offences and penalties:
  - f. petitioning the outcome of a referendum.
5. The Bill also replicates the regulatory regime that applies to third-party promoters in respect of election advertisements to apply to any promoters of referendum advertisements. These rules aim to provide an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and transparency.