

Ask Away project reassessment

In April, I contacted InternetNZ about the proposed plan for Ask Away. In seeking the perspectives of teachers about turning Ask Away into a resource for intermediate pupils, several issues were brought up which posed risks to the success of the project.

Barriers to uptake reported by teachers were:

- a reluctance to pick up new resources when they have full curriculums already,
- very little focus on national politics outside of election year,
- planning the school year a long time in advance,
- a preference for civic education to happen in a local community context.

In addition to these challenges, some political parties strongly supported further participation, but others were less responsive, meaning that cross party involvement would have been difficult to sustain.

Due to these issues, an alternative was proposed where Ask Away would be set up as a platform for people to create and run their own forums. Feedback on the proposed change from InternetNZ requested a more specific use case that involved youth and civic engagement.

The Wellington City Youth Council, supported by their council liaison officer Simon Wright, were eager to use Ask Away to host questions and answers with the candidates in the local body elections October 2016. We considered developing the platform so that groups (for example other youth councils) could create their own forums. However, because the use case is well outside of the period of the grant, and due to the project team's other work commitments, we have regretfully decided to end the project for now.

The project team will revisit the plan and will hopefully be able to provide Wellington Youth Council at least with a basic version of the platform next year without needing extra resource.

I am very sorry about this development, as the opportunity to develop Ask Away further was much appreciated. Thank you for your support and patience as we looked for alternatives.