

Election delay fourth in NZ history - here's 5 times

Hendry-Tennent, 2020

COVID-19 timeline
17 August 2020

17/08/2020

Ireland Hendry-Tennent



Watch: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces the new election date. Credits: Image - Getty; Video - Newshub.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has delayed the general election until October 17 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Auckland.

The election was scheduled for September 19 but was moved after a resurgence of the virus in the Auckland community.

The Prime Minister has been under increasing pressure from other political parties to move the election, but at a press conference on Monday, she reiterated that the decision was hers alone.

"Ultimately this was my decision," Ardern said when asked if she was pressured into changing the date by Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters.

"I have thought about every single element of this. I think New Zealanders deserve to have certainty and a balanced decision which I think this is," she said.

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The dissolution of Parliament, which was supposed to happen last Wednesday, is now due to happen on September 6. Ardern said she thinks it's appropriate to have Parliament sitting while big decisions are being made about the outbreak.

The Prime Minister has only moved the election by a month and says she has "no intention" of delaying it again.

Unlike many other countries, New Zealand doesn't have a fixed election date and instead, the Prime Minister decides the timing of the election.

This is only the fourth time in New Zealand's history that an election has been delayed.

The first time an election was delayed was the 1917 election, which was delayed because of World War I - instead taking place in 1919. A total of 560,673 people voted.

The second election which was postponed was 1934 and was due to the Great Depression. The election instead went ahead in 1935. The government postponed the election in the hopes the economic situation would improve.

However, the election saw the Labour Party score its first-ever victory with Michael Joseph Savage becoming the first Labour Prime Minister.

The previous coalition government, made up of the United Party and the Reform Party, suffered a major defeat which was put down to its handling of the Great Depression. United and Reform went on to merge into the National Party.

The most recent time an election was delayed was the 1941 election which was delayed until 1943 because of World War II. The Labour Party was re-elected by a comfortable margin. But as the war continued issues such as shortages and conscriptions saw the Labour Party lose some popularity and while it was re-elected in 1946 it was by a much narrower margin.

New key dates for the 2020 election:

- Monday: Business committee meets in the afternoon to agree on a Parliament timetable
- 6 September: Parliament dissolves
- 13 September: Writ Day, nominations close 18 September
- 3 October: Advance voting begins; last day for return of the writ is 12 November
- 17 October: Election Day

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