

History Resources

2005

(New Zealand Parliament, 2006)

Parliament timeline

Milestones in the history of New Zealand's Parliament.

1852

Britain passes the New Zealand Constitution Act, which enables Parliament to be established here.

1853

New Zealand holds its first elections for 37 members of the House of Representatives. The first Legislative Council (Upper House) has 14 appointed members.

1854

New Zealand's first Parliament opens on 24 May in Auckland.

1856

New Zealand achieves 'responsible government'. This means that Governments are formed with majority support in the House of Representatives.

1856

New Zealand's central and provincial Governments agree to a 'compact', which resolves their political and financial relationship.

1858

Wellington builds the Provincial Council chambers, soon to become New Zealand's Parliament Buildings.

1865

Parliament moves from Auckland to Wellington.

1867

Parliament creates four separate Māori seats in the House of Representatives and gives male Māori the right to vote for these seats. The House now has 74 members, and the Legislative Council has 36.

1870

Parliament introduces a secret ballot for its elections.

1876


Parliament abolishes the provincial Governments, leaving the central Government as the only lawmaking body.

1879

Parliament introduces universal male suffrage, which gives all men the right to vote. The parliamentary term reduces from 5 to 3 years.

1890

The number of members of the House of Representatives reduces from 95 to 74. The Legislative Council now has 39 members.

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1893

New Zealand women win the right to vote.

1899

The building for the General Assembly Library (now the Parliamentary Library) is constructed.

1902

The number of members of the House of Representatives rises from 74 to 80.

1907

A fire on 11 December destroys most of Parliament Buildings.

1912

Construction of the new Parliament House begins.

1918

Parliament moves into the incomplete Parliament House.

1919

New Zealand women become eligible for election to Parliament.

1933

Elizabeth McCombs becomes New Zealand's first woman to be elected to Parliament.

1936

Radio broadcasting of Parliament begins.

1949

Iriaka Ratana becomes the first Māori woman elected to Parliament.

1951

The Legislative Council (the appointed Upper House) is abolished.

1969

The number of members of Parliament increases from 80 to 84. From now on, this number rises regularly to keep up with population growth in the North Island. Parliament lowers the voting age from 21 to 20.

1974

Parliament lowers the voting age to 18.

1979

The Government moves into the Beehive.

1986

A royal commission on the electoral system recommends that New Zealand introduce mixed-member proportional representation (MMP).

1991

Parliament moves into Bowen House and a temporary debating chamber while Parliament Buildings are renovated.

1993

The number of members of Parliament reaches 99.

1996

Mixed-member proportional representation (MMP) replaces the first-past-the-post (FPP) electoral

system. There are now 120 members of Parliament. They return to the renovated Parliament House after 5 years in Bowen House.

1997

Jenny Shipley becomes the first female Prime Minister of New Zealand.

2005

Margaret Wilson becomes the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives.