

The processes for considering Māori wards are changing

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The Government is improving the way councils consider Māori representation as part of democracy.

On 26 July 2022, the Government announced the introduction of the Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill. Alongside other changes to the way local elections are conducted, the Bill will improve the way councils make decisions about specific representation for people on the Māori electoral roll. The Bill completes the Māori wards reforms that began in February 2021 with the passing of legislation that removed all mechanisms for holding binding polls on Māori wards.

Following public consultation in mid-2021, the Bill simplifies the representation review process councils must follow every six years in which they determine how their communities are represented. Decisions regarding Māori wards and general wards will become part of one process that includes:

- a strategic policy decision about Māori representation as the first step of the process; and
- detailed decisions about implementation of wards as the second step of the process.

Decisions must be informed by consultation with Māori and other communities of the district or region. Decisions will be made by councils on behalf of their communities. Implementation decisions, including decisions about the total number of councillors, ward boundaries and names, and decisions about community boards are subject to review by the Local Government Commission upon appeal.

Binding polls will not be able to be held on any matter that is part of a representation review.

More information about the Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill

The Bill makes a series of changes to improve the processes by which individuals and communities are represented through, and can participate in, local government elections. The full text of the Bill is available here: [Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill \[Legislation.govt.nz\]](#)

Alongside the announcement, the Minister of Local Government proactively released a series of Cabinet papers, briefings and supporting material that supported the Government in making the policy decisions behind the Bill.

These documents can be found here:

[Cabinet material and additional documents related to Local Government Electoral Legislation](#)

(PDF, 24.4MB)

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- [Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill fact sheet \(PDF, 229KB\)](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Statements](#)

The Government has announced that a Supplementary Order Paper will be introduced during the next stage of the Bill (the Committee of the Whole House stage).

The SOP will delay the provisions requiring councils to consider Māori representation as part of their representation review until after the 2025 local government elections. Council will still have the ability to optionally consider Māori representation.

The delay will assist in reducing the regulatory requirements on the sector at the current time, especially those councils affected by the extreme weather events who need to focus on the recovery.

The Cabinet papers agreeing to the SOP can be found here:

- [Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill - regulatory relief in light of Cyclone Gabrielle \(PDF, 823KB\)](#)
- [Local Government Electoral Legislation Bill: Approval for tabling Supplementary Order Paper \(PDF, 834KB\)](#)

The full text of the SOP can be found here: [Supplementary Order Paper No 358](#)

At the same time, Cabinet agreed to a second SOP to permanently enable remote participation in council meetings to count towards quorum, subject to a council's standing orders.

The full text of that SOP can be found here: [Supplementary Order Paper 367](#).

[\[MS1\]](#) Proactive release of Cabinet paper to be linked here

Public Consultation

From July to August 2021, public consultation was held on the second stage of changes to Māori ward processes. We consulted on six key differences between the Māori wards and general wards process:

- The requirements for councils to consider ward systems;
- The timing of decisions;
- Opportunities for public input;
- Decision-making rights and the role of the Local Government Commission;
- How and when wards can be discontinued; and
- The types of polls that councils can hold.

56 written submissions were received from councils, other organisations and individuals. These submissions, and the Department of Internal Affairs' Summary of Submissions with the methodology of the consultation and an analysis of the submissions, are available below. These have been released in full, except for submitters' contact information which is withheld in accordance with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Summary of Submissions:

[Māori ward and constituency processes consultation - Summary of submissions - PDF version \(PDF, 361KB\)](#)

[Māori ward and constituency processes consultation - Summary of submissions - WORD version \(DOCX, 112KB\)](#)

Submissions A-N:

[Māori ward and constituency processes submissions July-August 2021 - A-N \(PDF, 20MB\)](#)

Submissions O-Z:

[Māori ward and constituency processes submissions July-August 2021 - O-Z \(PDF, 19MB\)](#)

Cabinet paper and Regulatory Impact Statement

Cabinet paper (June 2021): [Public consultation on changes to Māori ward and Māori constituency processes \(PDF, 1.2MB\)](#)

Regulatory Impact Statement (June 2021): [Improving the mechanism for establishing Māori wards and constituencies at local government \(PDF, 668KB\)](#)

First stage of changes for Māori wards - February 2021

On 1 February 2021 the Minister of Local Government announced that the Government would take a two-stage approach to improving the legislative framework for Māori wards. In Stage 1, the Government introduced legislation to remove all mechanisms for holding binding polls on Māori wards. The poll provisions had been in place since 2002 but had been identified as an almost insurmountable barrier to the creation of Māori wards.

The Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill was introduced to Parliament on 9 February 2021. The Māori Affairs Select Committee received 12,508 written submissions on the Bill and heard oral submissions on 12 and 13 February 2021. The Bill was passed on Wednesday 25 February 2021.

The Local Government Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill further aligns the process for establishing Māori wards as with the process for establishing general wards.

Cabinet papers and Regulatory Impact Statement for the first stage of changes for Māori wards

Cabinet papers (December 2020 and February 2021): [Making it easier for local authorities to establish Māori wards for the 2022 local elections and Local Electoral \(Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies\) Amendment Bill: Approval for introduction \(PDF, 1.7MB\)](#)

Regulatory Impact Statement (December 2020): [Changes to the process for establishing Māori wards and constituencies \(PDF, 267KB\)](#)