

# Where does this election leave Māori and Pasifika? - The Front Page

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The finer details of the next Government are still being ironed out around the negotiating table, but two things have already been confirmed.

The next parliament of Aotearoa will have a spread of **32 Māori representatives** sitting across both the Government and Opposition parties. P.

Secondly, there will be **no Pasifika representatives** in a Government formed by National, Act and NZ First.

Speaking to *The Front Page* podcast, Pacific Business Trust CEO Mary Los'e says there was a big drop-off in Pacific voters in this year's election.

"It's a real shame that there's a lack of representation," Los'e says.

"Pacific voters in traditional high-voting Labour areas dropped considerably in the last election. For example, in Māngere, it went from 32,000 votes cast in 2020 to around 18,000 19,000 last month."

Los'e says that while none of the Pacific candidates made the final cut, she says there is some strong talent in the ranks of the National Party.

"National's got some great Pacific talent with former member Agnes Loheni, Te Atatū candidate Angee Nicholas and Ruby Manukia-Schaumkel. It's really unfortunate for those wahine and a real shame for the National Party to lose their voices.

"For me, there is evidence of apathy among Pacific voters as a community. We must reflect on our part in the outcome of no representation in the incoming Government, and we need to mobilise our communities to have a say."

On the flip side, the parties in Opposition do still have some strong voices representing Pasifika causes, including Auckland mayoral runner-up Efeso Collins for the Greens and Labour Party Deputy Leader Carmel Sepuloni.

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“As the old adage goes, a Government is only as strong as its Opposition. We can expect the incoming Government to be kept on their tippy toes 24/7, particularly with Deputy Prime Minister Sepuloni and Efeso Collins – these are two very well-versed political exponents.

“I’d like to think that we’ll see a bit of tag-teaming off the Opposition benches when it comes to question time.”

This comes off the back of Act leader David Seymour’s campaign promise that he would abolish the [Ministry of Pacific Peoples](#).

“I think this expression from the Act Party is really calling for accountability – and that’s a good thing,” says Los’e

“Yet, there are a lot of ways to express this, and the chosen way was more hurtful than helpful. For me, that episode was all about a power imbalance. When you have a platform, you have to be aware of the impact of your words.

“For many that I’ve engaged with in our Pacific community, it brought back the Dawn Raids and the societal bullying experience at the time.”

In addition to this, [Seymour has also taken aim at the Treaty of Waitangi](#) by calling for a referendum on the modern application.

Bernie O’Donnell, a businessman and chair of the Manukau Urban Māori Authority, says he doesn’t think we will end up seeing a referendum on this issue – simply because New Zealand’s relationship with race has evolved.

“Growing up in Aotearoa in the eighties was terrible, especially if you lived in the regions with a strong Māori population, you’d be subjected to racism every day,” O’Donnell says.

“Thankfully, for me anyway, I think those days are gone. I think our Pākehā brothers and sisters are just in a different space. There’s a really strong empathy with ourselves, with bonding with Māori, with understanding our world. There’s a strong desire for Māori to work with Pākehā so we can get everything right.”

O’Donnell says this also applies to many of our political leaders who seem committed to ensuring that there’s greater unity in the future.

“I have a lot of faith in our [incoming] Prime Minister Christopher Luxon,” says O’Donnell.

“From what I’ve heard, [he’s not interested in the Act Party’s demand](#) to the Te Tiriti o Waitangi back to a referendum. That says, ‘Hey, he’s a good man.’ And just because the race-baiting was loud and noisy and the media wanted to focus on that – and while it worries me – I think Aotearoa, as a nation, is a different place.”