



Te Puni Kōkiri
REALISING MĀORI POTENTIAL

Whaiwāhi ki ngā Pōti ā-rohe *Participate in Local Elections*



Local government elections are held once every three years. In September, voting papers for this year's election will be sent to all people on the electoral roll and you will need to return them by Saturday 13 October 2007. You will be able to vote for your local council, regional council and your District Health Board (DHB). In some areas you will also be able to vote for a community board or licensing trust.

From 27 July 2007, nominations will be called from people in local communities like yours who are interested in standing as candidates for these councils and boards. Māori are under-represented in all areas of local government so it's important that you understand how local government affects you, and how you can participate to your fullest in the system – either as a candidate or as a voter. The rolls and all nominations close on 24 August 2007. To exercise your vote you need to enrol.

■ WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS IMPORTANT?

Local government exists to provide for the well-being of communities. It gives you a real say in how your local community will function and progress. Councils and District Health Boards make many decisions that affect your community now and for the future. Your local and regional councils ensure that issues such as water supply, waste disposal, parks and libraries, roading and public transport are managed in an effective and responsible manner. In addition, District Health Boards have the responsibility for making important decisions that affect how health and disability services are delivered in your community.

■ HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS

There are 73 territorial authorities (city and district councils), 12 regional councils and 21 District Health Boards. People on the electoral roll in each area can elect fellow citizens to be mayors, councillors and members to make decisions representative of everyone in their communities.

■ WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW – ARE MĀORI UNDER-REPRESENTED?

Compared with the national population, Māori have been under-represented on councils following the last three local government elections. Census 2006 confirms 14 percent of people in New Zealand identify themselves as Māori. However, less than 5 percent of members elected to councils are Māori, and in District Health Boards just over 7 percent of elected members are Māori. Indeed, surveys conducted by Local Government New Zealand asking for a self-description of ethnicity show that the number of Māori elected to councils has declined slightly over the past 10 years, from 5.5 percent in 1998 down to 4.3 percent in 2004.

The message to Māori is clear: if you are concerned about local decisions being made that affect the life and well-being of your whānau, hapū and iwi, and your wider community, and you would like a greater say, then you should consider standing as a candidate and voting in the upcoming local government elections.





WHAT ARE MĀORI WARDS?

A council may choose to establish Māori wards and constituencies. If so, it has to advertise its intentions and 5 percent of electors may demand a poll.

Similar to the Māori parliamentary seats, Māori wards and constituencies establish areas where only those on the Māori parliamentary electoral roll vote for local government representatives in that area. Māori wards may be established for cities and districts while Māori constituencies may be established for regions. They sit alongside the general wards and constituencies, which also cover the whole city, district or region. In contrast, District Health Board elections are held "at large" – meaning every voter in the district has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate who stands.

At present, only the Bay of Plenty Regional Council has chosen to have dedicated Māori representatives; there are three Māori seats on the 13-seat council.

For more information:

For information on Māori wards and representation, go to the Local Government Commission's website www.lgc.govt.nz

WHY SHOULD I STAND FOR OFFICE?

If you want to make a difference in your community, now is the time to consider standing in this year's elections. Some of the ways, you could stand for office include standing for your council, or your community board or District Health Board.

Diverse New Zealand communities getting involved with their councils helps achieve sustainable decision-making. Nominations for candidates for over 1,000 positions available in councils and District Health Boards across New Zealand open on 27 July 2007, and will close 24 August 2007.

Candidates must be over the age of 18, a New Zealand citizen and enrolled on the electoral roll. Candidates need to be nominated by an elector from that district or region, and seconded by another. For District Health Board candidates, certain other eligibility criteria apply: these are set out on the Ministry of Health's website

For more information on standing, contact your council's/District Health Board's electoral officer.

For more information:

Go to the Ministry of Health's website on <http://www.moh.govt.nz/dhbelections> for information on District Health Boards.

HOW DO I VOTE - WHICH ELECTION SYSTEM SHOULD I USE?

There are two electoral systems used. These are:

1. First Past the Post (FPP) – voters tick the names of candidates they wish to vote for. The voter can vote for as many candidates as there are positions to be filled. The candidates with the most votes are elected.
2. Single Transferable Vote (STV) – voters use numbers to rank candidates in their order of preference. A voter would write "1" next to their favourite candidate, "2" next to their second favourite and so on. Voters may rank as many of the candidates as they wish. It's easy voting the STV way.

All District Health Boards and a few councils use the STV electoral system, but most councils have chosen to use the FPP electoral system.

For more information:

To find out about STV go to www.stv.govt.nz and for information on local elections go to www.localcouncils.govt.nz

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

You will receive your voting papers in the mail and you have to post them back in the freepost envelope provided. You will have three weeks to post the voting papers back – they must be in the hands of the electoral officer no later than 12 noon on 13 October 2007. Voting early helps results to be announced faster after the close of voting.

To vote in the local government elections, you must be:

- enrolled as a parliamentary elector, at an address in the district or city where you live.
- enrolled as a ratepayer elector for a property you own that is in a different district or city from where you live.

For information about how to enrol as a ratepayer elector, contact the council electoral officer in the council where your property is located.

For more information:

Information about how to enrol in the local elections may be found on the Electoral Enrolment Centre's website – www.elections.org.nz
For all contact details for your councils, go to www.localcouncils.govt.nz

SO WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO VOTE?

District, city and regional councils provide a range of services that help communities run smoothly.

Mayors and councillors are community leaders and act as your representatives when making decisions about council services and regulations. An effective elected member should be a good listener, a successful influencer and negotiator, impartial, prudent, responsible, temperate and sincere.

An important role of councillors is working with local people to set and achieve community outcomes – things that the community thinks are important for its overall well-being.

Councils must seek and consider community views, including those of Māori, before they make important decisions.

So voting for your mayor and your councillors at the local elections gives you an opportunity to influence many of the important decisions made about the place you live.

Many people support candidates who share their views, or who they think will do a good job of providing the things the community believes are important.

Whatever the reasons for voting, it is a chance to have a say about the future of your community.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT A GLANCE

- There are **85 local authorities** – 12 regional councils and 73 territorial authorities (city and district councils)
- The **largest region** is the Auckland region (population 1,303,068).
- The **smallest region** is the West Coast region (population 31,326).
- The **largest territorial authority** is Auckland City (population 382,539).
- The **smallest territorial authority** is Chatham Islands (population 609).
- The **median population** for territorial authorities is 30,678.
- Together they own assets with a combined value of \$79.4 billion.
- Together they owe \$4.4 billion in liabilities (accounts payable, term debt etc).
- They receive nearly \$5.4 billion in income each year (56 percent from rates; 13 percent from central government; 6 percent from investments; 5 percent from fees and fines; and 20 percent from other sources).
- They **spend** over \$5.3 billion each year (28 percent on roads and passenger transport; 16 percent on governance; and 17 percent on culture, recreation and sport).
- All local authorities use **postal voting**.
- There are 17 (20 percent) **female Mayors and Regional Council Chairs**.
- Local elections are held once every three years, on the second Saturday in October. The next local elections will be held on Saturday 13 October 2007.



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For more information visit www.localcouncils.govt.nz

THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

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