

Taranaki Regional Council Guidance on Māori Constituencies

Information for candidates and voters in the 2022 local elections

May 2022

Taranaki Regional Council's Māori constituency

What is a Māori constituency, how to stand, and about the Māori electoral roll

What is a Māori constituency?

Māori constituencies provide a way for Māori to contribute to decision-making and have representation at council. Taranaki Regional Council's Māori constituency will represent Māori in our region so that our decision-making is fairer and more inclusive.

Electors enrolled on the Māori electoral roll will vote for candidates standing for the Māori constituency. Similarly, electors enrolled on the general electoral roll will vote for candidates standing for general constituencies.

The successful Māori constituency candidate will become a councillor at council. Councillors have a responsibility to represent their communities. The Māori constituency councillor will have a particular responsibility to represent people of Māori descent and bring forward Māori views and aspirations. However, they also represent the entire region.

"Constituencies" are the parts of a council area that have been determined by population and communities of interest. These can be either general constituencies or Māori constituencies.

Council resolution to establish one or more Māori constituencies

Councils are required to provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes under the Local Government Act 2002. Establishing Māori constituencies is one way for our Council to achieve this.

The establishment of Taranaki Regional Council's Māori constituency was initiated by a resolution Council passed that the region be divided into one or more Māori constituencies (Local Electoral Act 2001, section 19Z).

How the law on Māori wards and constituencies changed in 2021

Until 2021, the legislation allowed a council resolution establishing Māori wards or constituencies to be overturned by a poll. The process was that a petition signed by 5% of the electors of a district, city or region could demand a poll on whether a local authority's decision to establish one or more Māori wards or constituencies should be countermanded.

The Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act 2021 repealed the poll provisions by:

- extending the deadline for local authorities to resolve to establish one or more Māori wards or constituencies to 21 May 2021 (rather those resolutions being required to have been made by 23 November 2020). This was a 'one-off' provision. This provided local authorities with a fresh opportunity to make decisions on Māori wards or constituencies for the 2022 local elections

- removing the ability for electors to bring a petition requiring a poll on the introduction of Māori wards or constituencies. Therefore, the only way Māori wards or constituencies will not be established in those areas is if the council itself resolves to undo its decision
- removing the ability for local authorities to resolve to hold binding polls on whether to establish Māori wards or constituencies (although non-binding polls may continue to be conducted)
- providing that past polls, or council resolutions to hold binding polls, on whether to establish Māori wards or constituencies cease to have any effect.

Taranaki Regional Council resolved to establish one or more Māori constituencies in 2021.

Representation review

Following our Council resolution to establish one or more Māori constituencies, we consulted with our community to help decide on what was fair and effective number of elected members to have, how they were elected, and whether they were elected from constituencies or region-wide. We also looked at the boundaries, names of constituencies and regional communities of interest.

Following the feedback, we looked at the options against the requirements of the Local Electoral Act 2001, the general electoral population; the Māori electoral population; the total number of elected members allowed under legislation; and the proportion to be elected from Māori constituencies.

We considered:

- The number of councillors we should have
- How many people are represented by each councillor
- Whether our communities would be fairly and effectively represented
- How many constituencies we should have and the names of those constituencies
- How Māori constituencies will be established and structured
- Whether any changes to constituencies or constituency boundaries were needed

Representation Arrangements for Taranaki Regional Council

After considering all the different options, Taranaki Regional Council resolved to have the following representation arrangements:

11 councillors in total, being:

10 general constituency councillors elected by constituency

- 5 for the New Plymouth General Constituency
- 2 for the North Taranaki General Constituency
- 2 for the South Taranaki General Constituency
- 1 for the Stratford General Constituency

1 Māori constituency councillor elected region-wide (Taranaki Māori constituency)

The new arrangements mean that electors on the Māori electoral roll will be able to vote at the next election for one Māori constituency councillor, in addition to the respective constituent territorial authority's elections (mayor, Māori ward councillor(s) and where applicable community board members).

About standing for a Māori constituency

Eligibility criteria and nominees

To be eligible to stand for a Māori constituency, a candidate must be a New Zealand citizen and their name must be on the Parliamentary Electoral Roll anywhere in New Zealand. They do not need to reside in the area (constituency) that they are standing for.

They will need to be nominated by two electors whose names appear on the Māori electoral roll within the area of election for which the candidate is standing.

Equally if a candidate is on the Māori electoral roll they can stand in a general constituency, and will need to be nominated by two electors whose names appear on the general electoral roll within the area of election for which they are standing.

Other requirements are that:

- The candidate or their spouse/partner must not have concerns or interests in contracts over \$25,000 with the council.
- If the candidate is subject to a Court Order under section 31 of the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act 1988, they should take legal advice.
- If the candidate is an employee of the council, they must resign before taking up their position as an elected member. The rules of some councils may require them to take leave for campaigning prior to the election.

There are not any formal qualifications required to become a candidate in the local elections. Elected members come from all walks of life and generally have a desire to serve their community.

Some skills that will help candidates run for election and be a successful councillor

Two skills that will assist candidates with their campaign are being able to publicly present their own opinions confidently, and being able to listen to the views of the people that they will be representing.

The following capabilities are useful in the elected member role, either some or all of them:

- quality decision-making
- political acumen
- leadership
- cultural awareness
- strategic thinking
- knowledge and understanding of Taranaki Regional Council and local government
- communication and engagement
- relationship building and collaboration

Affiliations

The nomination paper provides a space for a candidate to put an affiliation. An affiliation is described in section 57(3) Local Electoral Act 2001 as “an endorsement by any organisation or group (whether incorporated or unincorporated)”.

Candidates who are not part of a political party or group sometimes identify their affiliation as “Independent” or leave as blank (if left blank, nothing will show alongside the name of the candidate on the voting document).

A candidate requiring a specific party affiliation should have authority to adopt the affiliation from the party, organisation or group concerned (i.e. the electoral officer may require a letter of consent from the party, organisation or group giving its consent for the candidate to use the affiliation). This is a safety measure to avoid any illegal adoption of party, group or organisation affiliations.

If candidates wish to list whānau, hapū or iwi details as an affiliation, an endorsement or confirmation letter from a Marae, Whānau Trust, Iwi Authority, or other Māori organisation would be required. It is acknowledged whakapapa is a birth right and situations may occur where candidates may not feel they need to provide proof, in which case whakapapa can be highlighted in the context of the candidate profile statement and other forums and activities.

Situations may arise where the same affiliation is given by two or more candidates, or a candidate provides multiple affiliations. If a candidate provides multiple affiliations, an electoral officer may require multiple endorsement or confirmation letters.

Note that there are length limits to a candidate’s affiliation. The voting document and candidate booklet allow 38 characters before the affiliation truncates.

No affiliation that might cause offence to a reasonable person, or is likely to confuse or mislead electors, will be accepted by the electoral officer.

Candidate profile statement

Candidates may provide the electoral officer with a candidate profile statement with their nomination. This is a statement of up to 150 words containing information about themselves and their policies and intentions if elected to office. The profile may include a recent passport size photograph. The candidate profile statement must be true and accurate. The electoral officer is not required to verify or investigate any information included in this statement and it will be included with the voting document sent to each elector.

If candidates choose not to supply a profile statement or photograph, then a message will appear in the profile booklet that a statement/photograph was not supplied by the candidate.

If a candidate profile statement is submitted in Māori and English, the information contained in each language must be substantially consistent with the information contained in the other language. Therefore, in the case where a candidate includes a mihi or greeting as part of a candidate profile statement provided in Māori, the mihi or greeting should be explained

in the English version in a manner substantially consistent with the Māori version - still within the 150-word limit.

If a candidate is standing for more than one position, they are allowed a candidate profile statement for each position.

In addition, the candidate profile statement –

- must state whether or not the candidate's principal place of residence, being the address in respect of which the candidate is registered as a parliamentary elector, is in the local government area for which the candidate seeks election (for example, either "My principal place of residence is in the Taranaki Māori Constituency" or "My principal place of residence is not in the Taranaki Māori Constituency"); and
- if the candidate is seeking election to any other positions in elections to which the Local Electoral Act 2001 applies, must specify each position and state that the candidate is seeking to be elected to the positions.

These statements are not counted as part of the 150-word limit.

How much does it cost to lodge a nomination?

It costs \$200 incl. GST to lodge a nomination for each position standing. The funds must be deposited to the electoral officer by close of nominations (midday 12 August 2022).

When are nominations open?

Nominations open on Friday 15 July and close on Friday 12 August 2022 at midday and must be lodged with the electoral officer at the council you are standing for. Do not leave lodgement until the last day because if there are any problems with the details provided there might be insufficient time to resolve them and you could miss out.

About voting in a Māori constituency

An elector must be on the Māori electoral roll to vote for a candidate standing in a Māori constituency.

Voting documents will look different

Voting documents will be different than previous local elections for those on the Māori electoral roll. They will be able to vote for the candidates standing in the Māori constituency. They will not be able to vote for candidates standing in the general constituencies.

Who can be on the Māori electoral roll?

Only New Zealand Māori and the descendants of New Zealand Māori can choose to be on the Māori electoral roll. For those who are enrolling for the first time, they can choose if they want to be on the Māori electoral roll or the general electoral roll.

How to enrol for the first time

An application for registration as a parliamentary elector can be made online at www.vote.nz.

The identity verification needed is a New Zealand driver licence, New Zealand passport or RealMe verified identity.

If people are not able to enrol online, they can enrol or update their details in other ways, more information can be found here <https://vote.nz/enrolling/enrol-or-update/other-ways-to-enrol/> on the Electoral Commission website or they can call 0800 36 76 56 to arrange for forms to be sent to them directly.

How to change rolls

New electors of Māori descent can choose to be on the general or the Māori electoral roll when they enrol. Electors who are already enrolled are not able to change whether they are on the general or the Māori electoral roll before the local elections in October 2022.

The Māori Electoral Option governs the process for changing electoral rolls and this can only be done every five years after each five-yearly population census. The next Māori Electoral Option is planned for 2024.

However, the Government has recently consulted with the public about changing the timing and frequency of Māori Electoral Option and may make legislative changes in 2023. Regardless, any changes will be too late to affect the process before October 2022.

Voting by mail

Electors who are enrolled on the Māori electoral roll or the general electoral roll by Friday 12 August 2022 will receive their voting document in the mail. People can still enrol after this date but they will need to cast a special vote.

The local authority elections are postal elections. Voting documents will be delivered between Friday 16 to Wednesday 21 September 2022 and include a free return envelope. It is recommended votes be posted back to a NZ Post post box by Tuesday 4 October 2022 to ensure we get them before the close of voting. After 4 October 2022, votes are able to be returned to any of our Council's secure ballot boxes which we will have set up in Taranaki Regional Council offices and in each constituent territorial authority's offices (New Plymouth District Council, South Taranaki District Council and Stratford District Council). More information about this will be on our website closer to the election. The close of voting is Saturday midday 8 October 2022.

More Information

If you have more questions, there is more information on our website <https://taituara.org.nz>, or contact our Electoral Officer or the Council's electoral liaison person:

Electoral Officer:

Dale Ofsoske, Independent Election Services Ltd
Level 2, 198 Federal Street, Auckland
Phone: 0800 922 822
Email: dale.ofsoske@electionservices.co.nz

Council's electoral liaison person:

Mike Nield, Director – Corporate Services
Taranaki Regional Council 47 Cloten Road, Stratford
Phone: 06 765 7127
Email: mike.nield@trc.govt.nz



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