FAQs ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT >

Ko Tātou LGNZ.

ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT >

1/ What is local government?

It's the system of councils and boards (also known as local authorities) that make decisions about your community and service delivery in your area. It includes your Mayor, councillors and community or local board members.

There are 78 local authorities in New Zealand:

- 11 regional councils
- 12 city councils (which are largely urban)
- 54 district councils; and
- Auckland Council, (which combined eight former councils as of 1 November 2010).

2/ So what does local government do?

Councils develop plans and make decisions on how to manage your local area, including the natural and urban environment. This means engaging with communities to identify local needs and preferences and delivering or commissioning services to address them, such as

- providing libraries and parks
- planning for where houses, businesses and green areas should go
- ensuring communities have rubbish and recycling options
- organising roads, parking, and cycleways
- ensuring communities have access to portable drinking water; and
- providing business support and delivering pest control.

Other key activities include public transport, coastal management and the making and enforcing of bylaws (local laws) such as those around dog control, liquor licensing and noise control. Regional councils are also responsible for civil defence planning and preparing communities for emergencies.

3

Do Māori have a role in local government?

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002) and other statutes like the Resource Management Act 1991 require that councils have regard to, or take into account, the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi when making decisions. The LGA 2002 also requires councils to facilitate the participation of Māori in local authority decision-making processes. One way to achieve this is through establishing Māori wards.

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What are the reforms and changes happening in local government?

The 2025 local elections will occur at the same time that central government is considering a range of reforms with considerable significance for how councils will operate in the future. These changes are likely to affect:

- The LGA 2002, including the purpose of local government and the discretion of elected members to set policy and make decisions
- The RMA 1991, which will diminish the ability of local councils to make decisions about urban growth and density; and
- Drinking and wastewater. Councils are consulting on new options for the delivery of water services – options that will largely see water services transferred to arms-length bodies, like jointly owned council-controlled organisations.

There may also be changes to local electoral processes, like the introduction of a four-year term.

5

Why do we have local elections?

Local government is local democracy in action which means you choose who you want to represent you in council. You vote for your Mayor, your councillors and the people on your community or local boards.

Local elections are held every three years by postal vote.

6/

Who is allowed to vote in local elections?

Anyone over the age of 18 who has enrolled can vote. If you're on the electoral roll (which is the law once you turn 18), you can vote in local elections where you live.

Once you're enrolled, your local council will send you voting papers in the mail. You may vote in an area in which you live and in an area in which you own an additional property that pays rates to another council – but you can only vote once in any single election.

ABOUT STANDING FOR ELECTION >

7/ Can anyone stand for election?

Yes, if you are over 18 and can get two people to nominate you.

Because our communities are made up of people from all cultures and ethnicities, genders, ages, abilities, and ambitions, it's good for local democracy for that diversity to be reflected around the council table.

The role of an elected member is both challenging and rewarding. You'll need to be skilled in time management, engagement, teamwork, and collaboration. You'll also need to be able to take in a lot of information and be open to learning business and financial concepts.

8/ What roles can I stand for?

You could choose to stand for the following but there are rules around how many roles you can be elected to, which you can learn more about in our Candidates Guide:

- Mayor
- Councillor
- Local board member (Auckland only)
- Community board member
- Local licensing trust (if your district or city has one).

9/ How do I know if I have what it takes to stand?

There are several different skills you'll need to draw on, but the success of local government comes when all voices of a community can be heard and included. Most importantly you need to take into account all members of your community – even people you don't agree with! This is what is meant by 'representation'.

You also need to be able to think about strategic issues and take both a short and long-term view of the impact of your decisions. This is called 'governance'. Governance and representation are the fundamental roles undertaken by elected members.

ABOUT VOTING >

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How do I vote in local elections?

Local government elections are held by postal vote. Voting documents, including an envelope in which to return your vote with postage already paid, will be sent to all eligible voters by post in September this year. Votes need to be returned by midday on Saturday 11 October 2025.

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How do I know if I'm enrolled to vote in local elections?

If you've recently turned 18 and have never voted before, you need to enrol. You'll need to complete an enrolment form which you can pick up from:

- Your local city or district council offices
- Most libraries
- Post shops
- Your local Registrar of Electors

If you're already on the Parliamentary Electoral Roll, you'll be sent an enrolment update pack by the the Electoral Commission. If all your details are correct then you don't need to do anything and your voting papers will be sent to you in the post. You only have to enrol once in your life, but you do need to keep your contact details up to date when you move.

If you don't receive an enrolment update pack, you're either not enrolled or have changed your address, and your pack has been sent to the wrong place. If this happens, you'll need to contact the Electoral Commission or your local electoral officer, and complete an enrolment form.

If you're a non-resident ratepayer, then you'll need to enrol every three years. If you've previously been on the non-resident ratepayer roll, the council will send you a reminder.

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What's the difference between the General and Māori roll?

The Māori roll is only for people of Māori descent. People on the Māori roll may vote for Māori wards and Māori constituencies, if their district or regional councils provide such wards and constituencies.

If you're of Māori descent and enrolling for the first time, you need to decide which electoral roll you want to be on because you can only be on one at any time: the general roll or the Māori roll.

If you're already enrolled but wish to change the roll you're on then you need to contact the Electoral Commission for information on how to do this.

13

What is Single Transferable voting (STV)?

Some places in New Zealand use single transferable voting in local elections. Under this system, voters rank candidates in their order of preference. You would write "1" next to the name of your favourite candidate, "2" next to your second favourite candidate and so on.

With STV you still only have one vote but by showing your preferences for all the candidates, your single vote can be given (transferred) to your next favourite candidate if your most preferred candidate is so popular they don't need all their votes to reach the required number to get elected. Alternatively, if your preferred candidate is eliminated, your vote transfers to your next choice.

You don't need to rank all candidates on a voting paper if you don't wish to.

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What is First Past the Post voting?

Under the FPP (First Past the Post) electoral system, the candidate with the most votes wins. You get one vote, and that vote goes to one candidate.

ABOUT MĀORI WARDS AND CONSTITUENCIES >

15/

What are Māori wards?

A council can choose to establish Māori wards for their city or district (or constituencies for regional councils). Māori wards sit alongside the general wards of each city or district with elected members having the same roles and responsibilities as those elected from the general wards.

16/

Who can stand for election in a Māori Ward?

To be eligible to stand a candidate must be:

a. A New Zealand citizen (by birth or citizenship ceremony)

b. Enrolled as a Parliamentary elector (anywhere in New Zealand); and

c. Nominated by two electors whose names appear on the electoral roll within the ward a candidate is standing for.

Candidates in Māori wards do not need to be of Māori descent, but they do need to be on the parliamentary electoral roll. However, you cannot stand for both a General ward and a Māori ward at the same time.

Starting with the 2025 local elections, any decision to establish a Māori ward or constituency will be subject to a binding community poll.

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Who can vote for candidates in Māori wards?

Only people enrolled on the Māori electoral roll for the area can vote for candidates standing in their Māori ward.

Electors on the Māori electoral roll can only vote for candidates from a Māori Ward and for the Mayor. Similarly, electors on the General electoral roll can only vote for candidates from a General Ward and the Mayor.

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Do Māori Ward elected members only represent Māori?

No. Once elected, all elected members, whether elected from General or Māori wards, take a formal oath of office to represent the entire community.

KEY DATES FOR THE 2025 ELECTIONS >

- Nominations open Friday 4 July 2025
- Nominations close noon, Friday 1 August 2025
- Delivery of voting documents Tuesday 9 September-Monday 22 September 2025
- Appointment of scrutineers by noon, Friday 10 October 2025
- Depending on your council policy: removal of election signs by midnight Friday 10 October 2025
- Voting closes noon, Saturday 11 October 2025
- Preliminary results available as soon as practicable after close of voting on Saturday 11 October 2025
- Official declaration of results approximately Thursday 16 October 2025
- Return of expenses form approximately Friday 13 December 2025.

USEFUL LINKS >

https://www.votelocal.co.nz – for information on the 2025 local authority elections for candidates, Voters and councils by Taituarā and Local Government New Zealand.

www.vote.nz – to enrol to vote in New Zealand's elections, maintained by the Electoral Commission.

www.localcouncils.govt.nz – for information about local government, councils, and useful links by the Department of Internal Affairs.


Ko Tātou
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