

FAQs

Frequently asked questions about
local government



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 the delivery of services in your area. It includes your Mayor, Councillors and Community or Local board members.

There are 78 local authorities representing all areas of New Zealand:

- 11 Regional Councils
- 12 City Councils (which are largely urban)
- 54 District Councils
- 1 Auckland Council, (which combined 8 former councils on 1 November 2010).

You can see a list of them all, here: [Council maps and websites | Ko Tātou LGNZ](#)

2. So, what does local government do?

They develop plans and make decisions on how to manage your local area, including the natural and urban environment. This means defining rules, responsibilities and funding for local services and activities including: schools, libraries and parks; planning for where houses, businesses, green areas and streets will go; rules around buildings; managing your rubbish and recycling; organising roads, parking, and cycle ways; providing business support and delivering pest control.

Other important activities include making and enforcing bylaws (local laws) such as those around dog control, liquor licensing and noise control; civil defence planning and preparing communities for emergencies.

3. Do Māori have a role in local government?

Under the Local Government Act 2002, Councils must take appropriate account of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi, to facilitate participation by Māori in local authority decision-making processes. One aspect of achieving this is through the establishment of Māori wards – see more on that below.

What are the reforms and changes happening in local government?

The current Government has a significant programme of reform underway that will impact how local government will function in the future.

Future for Local Government

An independent Panel is reviewing the system of local governance aimed at enhancing communities' wellbeing and environmental sustainability. It is considered an opportunity to create a new system of local governance and democracy that will effectively respond to a changing New Zealand and create conditions for communities to thrive.

Learn more about the review here: www.futureforlocalgovernment.govt.nz

Three Waters

The Government is proposing four new, large water service delivery entities to manage our drinking, waste and storm water, also known as the three waters, rather than control sitting with individual Councils as it does today. The scale of the entities means they would be able to borrow enough to fund the investment needed in water services and infrastructure over the next 30 years.

Learn more about Three Waters here: www.threewaters.govt.nz

Resource Management Act

The Government is repealing the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and replacing it with new legislation. The reform of the RMA represents a significant opportunity for transformative and systemic change. LGNZ will be advocating for councils to ensure that the new legislation is fit for purpose.

Learn more about the Resource Management System Reform here:

<https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/key-initiatives/resource-management-system-reform/overview/>

4. Why do we have local elections?

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

Local elections are run by local councils and held every three years by postal vote.

5. Who is allowed to vote in local elections?

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

Once you are enrolled, your local council will send you voting papers in the mail.

About standing for election

6. 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 and ages, abilities, and ambitions – we need the same level of diversity at in our Councils and on our boards.

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

7. 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. See more about this in our Candidates Guide:

- Mayor
- councillor
- local board member
- community board member
- local licensing trust (if your district or city has one)

8. How do I know if I have what it takes to stand?

There are a lot of different skills you will 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 care about all members of your community and be prepared to advocate for everyone – even people you don't agree with! This is called 'representation'.

You also need to be able to think about strategic issues and take both a short and long-term view of the impact your decisions will have. This is called 'governance'. These two concepts are at the heart of local government.

Finally, you will also need to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi in your role.

LGNZ's Candidate Guide has all the information you need to know if you are thinking about standing. Plus our Guide to Local Government outlines essential information about how councils work.

[See more information and the guides here](#)

Most importantly you need to care about all members of your community and be prepared to advocate for everyone – even people you don't agree with!



About voting

9. How do I vote in local elections?

Local government elections are held by postal vote. Voting documents, including an envelope to return your vote with the postage already paid, will be sent to all eligible voters by post during September 2022. Votes needed to be returned by 12 noon on Saturday 8 October 2022.

10. How do I know if I am enrolled to vote in local elections?

If you have recently turned 18 and have never voted before, you probably need to enrol. You only have to enrol once in your life, but you do need to keep your contact details up to date when you move.

You will need to complete an enrolment form which you can pick up from:

- Your local city or district council offices
- The main libraries in the Wellington Region
- Post shops in the Wellington Region
- Your local Registrar of Electors
- The Electoral Enrolment Centre

If you are already on the Parliamentary Electoral Roll, you will be sent an enrolment update pack by the Enrolment Services at the Electoral Commission. If all your details are correct you don't need to do anything. Your voting papers will be sent to you in the post.

If you don't receive an enrolment update pack, you are either not enrolled or you have changed address and your pack has been sent to the wrong place. If this happens, you will need to complete an enrolment form.

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

The Māori roll is only for people of Māori descent. This roll gives tangata whenua clear representation in elections with seats specifically set aside for people of Māori descent. The general roll is for everyone else.

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: the general roll or the Māori roll.

If you are already enrolled but wish to change the roll you are on, you can only do so during the Māori Electoral Option which takes place every five or six years after the Census. The next Māori Electoral Option is scheduled for 2024

Find out more about the Māori roll here: <https://vote.nz/enrolling/get-ready-to-enrol/general-roll-or-maori-roll/>

12. What is Single Transferable voting (STV)?

Some places in Aotearoa 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.

13. 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

14. What are Māori wards?

A Council can choose to establish Māori wards for their city or district which supports achieving Māori representation in decision making. The Māori wards sit alongside the general wards of each city or district and elected members have the same roles and responsibilities as those elected from the general wards.

Like the Māori Parliamentary seats, Māori wards establish areas where only those on the Māori Parliamentary electoral roll vote for the candidates in that Ward.

15. Who can stand for election in a Māori Ward?

To be eligible to stand a candidate must be:

- A New Zealand citizen (by birth or citizenship ceremony); and
- Enrolled as a Parliamentary elector (anywhere in New Zealand); and
- 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.

16. 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, while electors on the General electoral roll can only vote for candidates from a General Ward and the Mayor.

17. 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

15 July 2022	Candidate nominations open and roll opens for public inspection
15 July - 12 August 2022	Receipt of candidate nominations
12 August 2022 at 12 noon	Candidate nominations close and roll closes
17 August 2022	Public notice of candidates' names
16 - 21 September 2022	Voting documents delivered
16 September - 8 October 2022	Progressive roll scrutiny, special voting period, early processing
8 October 2022 at 12 noon	Election day - voting closes midday
8 October 2022 from 12 noon	Preliminary results
13 - 19 October 2022	Declaration of results
October/November 2022	Elected members' swearing in ceremonies

Helpful links

www.votelocal.org.nz – for information on the 2022 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.

Government Reforms: For information on the programme of reform underway visit www.lgnz.co.nz/reforms/ or the individual sites for each programme:

- Resource Management Act reform: <https://environment.govt.nz/what-government-is-doing/key-initiatives/resource-management-system-reform/overview/>
- Three Waters: threewaters.govt.nz
- Future for Local Government Review: www.futureforlocalgovernment.govt.nz



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