

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF MĀORI WARDS FOR TAUPŌ DISTRICT

What are Māori wards?

The option of having Māori wards has been developed as a way to enhance the role of Māori in local government decision-making and to ensure Māori voices in the community are heard. In local government elections, Māori wards establish areas where those on the Māori electoral roll vote for candidates standing in that area. Essentially, if Māori wards are established, people enrolled on the Māori electoral roll will vote for candidates in Māori wards, while those on the general electoral roll, will vote for candidates in the general wards.

Is Council required to make a decision on Māori wards?

Under the Local Electoral Act 2001 Council must consider establishing Māori wards every six years.

The Local Government Act 2002 also requires councils to maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes. The legislation also recognises the Crown's responsibility to take appropriate account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The establishment of Māori wards under the Local Electoral Act is one mechanism for providing opportunities for Māori to contribute to Council decision making.

The Local Government Commission has advised that given councils' obligations under the Local Government Act 2002 relating to Māori participation, the option of Māori wards warrants careful consideration.

Why is the decision on establishing Māori wards happening now?

While Council is required to consider the establishment of Māori wards every six years, a commitment was made in 2017, when Council last considered the establishment of Māori wards, to review Māori representation again in 2020.

Can the community overturn Council's decision to establish Māori wards?

Council's decision may be overturned if a petition signed by more than 5% of electors, enrolled as eligible to vote in the Taupō District in 2019, (1241 people) requests a poll be carried out under the Local Electoral Act 2001. The results of the poll are binding and can overturn the Council's decision.

What does a petition need to contain to be valid?

To be valid, a petition must contain:

- The signatures, names and addresses, for which each person is qualified as an elector of the Taupō District, of at least 1241 electors (on the electoral role for Taupō District)
- And delivered to the Chief Executive Taupō District Council, 30 Tongariro Street, Taupō by 4.30pm on 22 February 2021.

When does a petition to hold a poll have to be received by?

A petition can be lodged at any time. However, for a poll to take effect for the 2022 election, Council would need to receive a valid petition by 22 February 2021.

What is a poll?

A poll is a vote on a specific question like a referendum. The poll will be mailed to all people registered on the Taupō District electoral roll. It will ask electors to vote for or against the establishment of Māori wards for the Taupō District.

If a valid petition is received, when would a poll be held?

If a valid petition is received the Council's electoral officer must give public notice of the poll. The poll must be held no later than 89 days after the electoral officer receives notice of a valid petition for a poll and by 21 May 2021.

Is a poll binding?

The outcome of the poll will be binding for the 2022 and 2025 triennial elections for Taupō District.

How much does the poll cost?

The estimated cost of holding a poll is between \$85,000 and \$90,000. Council pays these costs.

What happens if Māori wards are to be established?

If no valid petition is received or the poll confirms the Council's decision Māori wards will be established.

If Māori wards are established, the number of councillors elected for Maori wards and Māori ward boundaries must be finalised as part of a representation review. These reviews determine:

- the number of councillors to be elected,
- the basis of election for councilors (Māori wards, general wards or at large),
- if this includes wards, the boundaries and names of those wards,
- the number of councillors to be elected from the Māori wards and the number from the general wards
- whether to establish, alter or disestablish community boards and membership arrangements for those boards.

Who can stand for election in a Māori ward?

To stand for election for a Maori ward in a local body election a person must be:

- eligible to stand for election; and
- nominated by two electors on the Māori electoral roll within the ward where they are standing.

To be eligible to stand for election, 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 respective area that a candidate is standing for.

Candidates in Māori wards do not have to be of Māori descent.

Candidates cannot stand for general and Māori wards at the same time.

Can electors on the Māori electoral roll vote for candidates in general wards and vice versa?

No. If Māori wards are established people enrolled on the Māori electoral roll can only vote for candidates in a Māori ward(s) and cannot vote for members of a general ward. Similarly, people who are enrolled on the general electoral roll can only vote for members of the general ward(s) but not for members of the Māori ward(s).

Who votes for the Mayor?

All electors, from both the general and Māori wards, vote for the Mayor.

Do Māori ward elected members only represent Māori?

No, all elected members, whether elected from general or Māori wards, represent the entire community.

How many Māori ward councillors would there be?

The number of councillors elected from one or more Māori wards is calculated using a formula in the legislation (Schedule 1A of the Local Electoral Act 2001). The formula uses the Māori and general electoral populations of the district derived from the 2018 census, relative to the total number of councillors.

For the Taupō District Council, the Māori electoral population is 7,155 and the general electoral population is 30,051 (as at the 2018 census).

Assuming a total of 11 councillors (plus Mayor) remain for Taupō, the formula requires 2 Māori ward councillors elected from one or more Māori wards and nine councillors elected from one or more general wards.

Frequently asked questions
Establishment of Māori wards for Taupō District

I've heard that the legislation may be changing. Is this true?

Following the general election, Local Government Minister Nanaia Mahuta stated that she would be introducing legislation soon to remove the ability for electors to demand a poll from the process for establishing Māori wards. No timing has been given yet for this change in the legislation.

Where can I find out more?

Phone us on 07 376 0899 or email smavor@taupo.govt.nz.