



*By email*

Dear Mayors and Chairs,

## **How Cabinet decisions relating to 2025 Local Elections will affect councils that resolved to establish Māori wards**

I am writing to give you an update on the Government's progress implementing coalition agreements on changes to the legislation for Māori wards and constituencies. This letter also outlines the proposed timing for changes, and the next steps and options for your council.

### ***Reinstatement of the pre-2021 binding poll provisions***

The Government will introduce a Bill in the next few months to restore binding polls on the establishment of Māori wards (and constituencies). The intention is that the changes will be enacted by the end of July 2024. There will be an opportunity to make submissions to select committee on this Bill.

From the next term of local government, councils will be able to initiate binding polls on Māori wards. Electors will also be able to petition their council to hold a binding poll. The policy settings for binding polls will be restored to as they were prior to 2021, including the 5% threshold for petitions calling for a binding poll.

### ***Transitional arrangements and options for your council***

The Bill will also include transitional arrangements for councils, such as yours, that resolved to establish Māori wards without an opportunity for a binding poll but have not yet implemented that resolution.

Government policy is that you will have the option to either:

- Option A - resolve this year to rescind the decision to create the Māori wards or constituencies by council resolution (to take effect at the 2025 local elections); or
- Option B - hold a binding poll on the question of Māori wards/constituencies at the 2025 local elections (to take effect at the 2028 local elections).

If your council resolves this year to rescind the decision to create the Māori wards/constituencies (Option A) and your council did not complete a representation review in the last term, you will need to complete a shortened representation review process by the beginning of April 2025 (Option AA). The shortened process will be provided for in the Bill.

If completing a shortened representation review process will be challenging for your council, there may also be an alternative implementation option (Option AB). Option AB would mean continuing with your current representation arrangements for the purposes of the 2025 local elections, even if it has been two terms since your most recent representation review. Under either of AA or AB your council would be required to complete a standard representation review prior to the 2028 local elections.

If your council prefers the default option of holding a binding poll at the 2025 local elections (Option B), and the poll result is against Māori wards/constituencies, your council will then need to follow the standard representation review process before the 2028 local elections.

### ***Local elections timeframes***

The Bill will also make changes to some of the statutory timeframes for the 2025 local elections and future elections and polls, including increasing the voting period from 22.5 to 32.5 days. The postal delivery period for voting papers will increase to 14 days in response to advice from NZ Post that they will not be able to meet current statutory timeframes. This will seek to ensure that NZ Post can deliver voting papers to all electors within legislated timeframes. My officials can provide more information on the proposed timing changes if you wish.

### ***Contacts for more information***

Officials from the Department of Internal Affairs and the Local Government Commission will be available to discuss these options and provide advice and support on how your council will be affected.

For questions about the Bill, and the changes to Māori ward processes (including transitional arrangements) and election timelines, please contact: Rowan Burns, Policy Manager, Governance and Democracy Team, Department of Internal Affairs, [rowan.burns@dia.govt.nz](mailto:rowan.burns@dia.govt.nz), 027 302 5426.

For questions about how to manage representation review processes, please contact the Local Government Commission. You can contact the Commission by email at [info@LGC.govt.nz](mailto:info@LGC.govt.nz), or by phone at (04) 460 2228.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simeon Brown', written in a cursive style.

Hon Simeon Brown  
**Minister of Local Government**