

# Have your say

## Do you support the establishment of a Māori constituency for Taranaki Regional Council?



Taranaki Regional Council is seeking the community's views on whether we should establish a Māori constituency.

Taranaki Regional councillors are elected to represent constituencies across the region. If this proposal went ahead, there would be both general and Māori constituencies. Voters enrolled on the Māori electoral roll would vote for candidates in a Māori constituency. Those on the general electoral roll would vote for candidates in a general constituency. All councillors would have equal standing.

A Māori constituency is similar to Māori seats in Parliament, which most New Zealanders will be familiar with.

At this time, our preferred option is "yes" to a Māori constituency. But before a final decision is made, we want to hear what you think. The Council will consider all feedback with an open mind. Please complete the attached submission form and return it by **4pm on Friday, 19 March, 2021**.

### Why establish a Māori constituency?

The option of Māori wards or constituencies was developed by parliament as a way to enhance the role of Māori in local government. One of the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2002* is to facilitate participation by Māori in local authority decision-making processes.

It is crucial that Māori perspectives and cultural values are fairly represented and understood at the Council decision-making table, alongside those of the wider community. We believe a Māori constituency councillor would bring with them a strategic Māori lens on issues as well as the ability to draw on and foster relationships with Māori across the region.

While all councillors must act in the best interests of the whole region, a Māori constituency would provide a democratic mandate for its councillor to represent Māori views – just as a South Taranaki or New Plymouth constituency councillor does for their constituents.

### Why consider this now?

There has been a significant shift in Government policy around Māori wards and constituencies in recent months. The Government signaled its clear intent when it passed the *Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act* last month.

Among other things, the Act removes the mechanism for a binding ratepayer poll to challenge a council's decision to introduce a Māori constituency. This had the potential to expose the Council to a heavy financial cost and was a factor in a previous Council decision not to introduce a Māori constituency.

The Act also extended the deadline for councils to introduce Māori wards or constituencies to 21 May, 2021. This gives councils a fresh opportunity to reconsider their positions on Māori representation in time for the 2022 elections.

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# Frequently asked questions

## How is the Council facilitating participation by Māori in its decision-making processes – and what lies ahead?

Māori are already represented on the Council's two key committees that make decisions on environmental and resource management issues. This has been a productive first step, but the imperative from Government and iwi alike is for all councils to do more.

For example, the Essential Freshwater reform includes requirements for greater Māori involvement. There are joint and continuing efforts by the region's iwi and local bodies to reach participation agreements known as Mana Whakahono a Rohe, as set out in a 2017 amendment to the *Resource Management Act* (RMA).

A post-election priority for the Government is a complete overhaul of resource and environmental legislation, with new statutes to replace the RMA. This is expected to further strengthen Māori involvement in the process.

## How would a Māori constituency affect the three iwi representatives on the standing committees?

It wouldn't. The three iwi positions on the Policy and Planning Committee and the Consents and Regulatory Committee are mandated by Treaty of Waitangi – Te Tiriti o Waitangi settlement legislation so would remain in place regardless of the Council's decision on a Māori constituency.

## Who could stand as a candidate for a Māori constituency?

Any eligible voter is entitled to stand for a Māori constituency, regardless of whether they are on the general or Māori electoral roll.

## If a Māori constituency was created, would that increase the total number of councillors?

If the decision was made to create a Māori constituency, the Council would then conduct a representation review which would decide how many constituencies there would be, their boundaries and how many councillors in each.

The Council currently has 11 elected councillors from four constituencies – New Plymouth (five), North Taranaki (two), Stratford (one) and South Taranaki (three). This is not set in stone.

## Do other councils have a Māori constituency or ward?

Nine councils have already decided to establish Māori constituencies or wards for the 2022 local elections (including New Plymouth District Council and South Taranaki District Council), joining three councils who established these at earlier elections. Other councils are also reviewing their arrangements.

## What are the next steps?

Submissions close on 19 March 2021. A hearing will be held on 6 April, 2021, with a decision to follow. If you wish to be heard in person please remember to tick the relevant box on the submission form.

If the decision is to create a Māori constituency, a representation review would then be held to confirm electoral details, in time for the 2022 local authority elections.

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## Where can I find more information?

For more details go to:

[www.trc.govt.nz/haveyoursay](http://www.trc.govt.nz/haveyoursay)

# Submission form



Name:

Organisation/group (if applicable):

Postal address:

Email:

Phone number:

I wish to present my submission personally at a hearing scheduled for 6 April, 2021 in Stratford Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you support the establishment of a Māori constituency for Taranaki Regional Council? (tick one)

Yes ☐ (This is the Council's preferred option) No ☐

*Note that your submission and any information you supply as part of it is considered public information and will be available in reports and documents relating to this process and will be published on our website.*

**Comments:** (attach additional pages if required)

Area for handwritten comments, featuring horizontal dotted lines and a large yellow spiral graphic on the right side.

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**Return this form by 4pm, Friday 19 March, 2021 to:**

'Māori Constituency submission', Chief Executive,  
Taranaki Regional Council, Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352  
or email to [haveyoursay@trc.govt.nz](mailto:haveyoursay@trc.govt.nz).

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