



August 6th 2021

Ministry of Justice

Re: Māori Electoral Option

BY EMAIL:

electoral@justice.govt.nz

Māori Electoral Option

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on the time and frequency of the Māori Electoral Option. We congratulate the government on its intention to reconsider the timing and frequency of the Māori Electoral Option.

Who are we?

The PHA is a national association with members from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Our organisation's vision is 'Good health for all - health equity in Aotearoa', or 'Hauora mō te katoa – oranga mō te Ao', and our purpose is to advocate for the health of all New Zealanders.

To achieve this, we provide a forum for information and debate about public health action in Aotearoa New Zealand. Public health action aims to improve, promote and protect the health of the whole population through the organised efforts of society.

We recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, defining respectful relationships between tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti, and we are actively committed to supporting Te Tiriti Articles in policy and legislation. Accordingly, we recommend that the bill include explicit reference to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and achieving health equity for Maori, as objectives of this legislation.

We support a change in the timing and frequency of the Māori Electoral Option

The long lead in time is unfair

We see no reason why, given that voters can enrol on the day of voting at a polling station, it can be justified to have such a long lead-in time for a choice between rolls.

Frequent change of address affecting Māori disproportionately

Māori are disproportionately affected by housing insecurity and frequent address changes. This makes decisions about rolls difficult, as voters can find themselves in different electorates at short notice, and not knowing the candidates (Māori or General). This therefore in effect disenfranchises Māori.

Māori should have two votes: One General and One Māori

We advocate for Māori to have two votes: one on the General roll to address issues and policies more broadly focussed on National governance, and one for candidates on a Māori roll to ensure that very specific issues for Māori are not lost in the disparity created by a majority parliament.

The current arrangements have the effect that potential Māori MPs may be forced to choose to belong to a mainstream political party in order to gain a real voice. Māori voters may choose the General roll in the belief that this is where the real power lies. This creates the false impression that Māori voters are not in favour of Māori candidates, diminishing the ability of Māori roll MPs to advocate for more effective solutions for their constituencies.

Recommendations:

We recommend a change or removal of current electoral bylaws that create barriers for Māori

- We recommend that the current barriers created by unfair electoral bylaws be removed/ or changed to enable Māori capability to move between general and Māori electoral roles at the time of elections. This gives effect to Oritetanga and Te Tiriti by allowing Māori to exercise their Rangatiratanga, and not being unfairly limited by the current bylaws preventing movement from general to Māori rolls outside the current prescribed four month window every six years.
- We recommend that the voting processes that disenfranchise Māori who move frequently be changed to enable easier access to voting in the instance where they have recently moved into a new electorate. At present, this is by special vote, which is cumbersome, time consuming, and deters Māori from voting at all.
- We advocate for two votes for Māori: one for the Māori roll to address Māori issues specifically, and the other to address issues and policies more broadly focussed on National governance.

We welcome discussion on any of our recommendations, and applaud the government in raising this most pertinent issue for consultation.

Ngā mihi kaitiakitanga



Chief Executive Officer

Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui ō Aotearoa

Public Health Association of New Zealand