

Feedback by

Hamilton City Council Staff

MĀORI ELECTORAL OPTION - NEW ZEALAND ELECTORAL COMMISSION

5 August 2021

It should be noted that the following feedback is from staff at Hamilton City Council and does not represent the views of the Council itself.

1.0 KEY MESSAGES AND CONCERNS

- 1.1 There are 32 Councils that have recently established Maori wards for the 2022 local authority elections, including Hamilton City Council.
- 1.2 The timing of the five-year period between each Maori Electoral Option and the three-year period between the Local Council elections do not take into consideration the recent establishment of the Maori wards.
- 1.3 Voters who wish to move between electoral rolls during the Maori Electoral Option will be unable to do so prior to the next 2022 local authority elections. This needs to be considered in the review of the timing and frequency of the Maori Electoral Option.
- 1.4 Failing to allow sufficient time for voters to move to the Maori electoral roll will create a barrier for democratic participation to vote in the Maori electoral roll for the newly established Maori Wards.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Hamilton City Council staff welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the New Zealand Electoral Commission on the Maori Electoral Option, and in particular the timing of it in alignment with local elections. Included in this submission are the key messages, concerns, and the background to those concerns.
- 2.2 Hamilton City Council has considered the impact of the timing of the Maori Electoral Option and submits feedback on behalf of Hamilton City Council staff. Hamilton City Council's Elected Members have not yet formally made recommendations on this feedback due to timing restraints but have reviewed the staff feedback and are supportive of the points made. A more in-depth response to the 'Changes to Maori Ward and Constituency Processes' due on 27 August 2021 will be submitted by the Council at a later date.

3.0 BACKGROUND TO OUR KEY MESSAGES AND CONCERNS

- 3.1 Hamilton City Council is one of 32 Councils that have recently established Maori Wards. This is a large proportion of Councils and voters who will be impacted by the timing of the Maori Electoral Option across New Zealand.
- 3.2 Hamilton City Council has considered the timeline for Maori Wards being established this year for the 2022 local authority elections and the next Maori Electoral Option being in 2024. The ability to move between rolls prior to the next local election to vote for the newly established Maori

Wards is not currently available to voters for the next local election.

- 3.3 This will likely create barriers to democratic participation and be detrimental for voter engagement and efficacy as voters will be unable to move to the Maaori roll following the establishment of Maaori wards in many Councils.
- 3.4 There will be high level of confusion amongst the community (especially those who have actively campaigned for Maaori wards) and an increase in complaints if they are not able to move to the Maaori roll, particularly as there will be a high level of expectation to be able to do so for the 2022 local authority elections, given the interest in this space. This is a major consideration that should have been considered when the removal of the binding ballot was made.
- 3.5 Should the timing for the Electoral Option be amended, the allocated four-month period to allow the change between rolls and the time between now and the next local elections needs to be considered, in particular taking into account the time Councils need to be able to publicise and educate voters on their option to do so prior to the election.

4.0 FURTHER INFORMATION AND OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS OUR FEEDBACK

- 4.1 Should the New Zealand Electoral Commission require clarification of the above points, or additional information, please contact **Becca Brooke** (Governance Manager) on 07 838 6439 or 027 422 6469, email becca.brooke@hcc.govt.nz in the first instance.
- 4.2 Hamilton City Council staff would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of our feedback with the New Zealand Electoral Commission in more detail.

Yours faithfully



Richard Briggs
CHIEF EXECUTIVE