**Māori wards and appointments to Council Committees**

Similar to the Māori Parliamentary seats, Māori wards establish areas where only those on the Māori Parliamentary electoral roll vote for the candidates in that ward. The Māori wards sit alongside the general wards of each city or district.

**Why has Nelson City Council decided to establish a Māori ward?**

The Local Government Act includes requirements that Nelson City Council recognise and respect the Crown’s responsibility to take appropriate account of principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and maintain and improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

Establishing a Māori ward is one way of providing for the inclusion of a Māori voice and perspectives in Council decision-making. It is also consistent with Council’s longstanding view that the establishment of a Māori ward would be a positive step for Māori and Council partnership. Council believes that working in partnership with Māori and bringing te ao Māori (a Māori world view) to the Council table will benefit the whole community.

You can read more about the reasons Council supported the establishment of a Māori ward in Whakatū [**here**](https://our.nelson.govt.nz/media-releases-2/nelson-city-council-supports-the-establishment-of-a-maori-ward-in-nelson-whakatu/).

**How is a Māori Ward established?**

In March 2021, changes to the Local Electoral Act allowed Council to resolve to establish a Māori ward for the 2022 local government elections. This law change removed the potential for a binding public poll on the establishment of a Māori ward if 5% of voters requested one.

Nelson City Council resolved to establish a Māori ward on 13 May 2021.

**What area will the Māori Ward cover?**

The Māori ward covers the whole Nelson electoral boundary and applies to those on the Māori electoral roll. As it must sit alongside general wards, these will be established through a representation review in the second half of 2021.

**What does a Representation Review determine?**

* The total number of councillors to be elected
* How many general wards would best represent the communities of interest in Nelson, what their boundaries would be, what they will be named and how many councillors each ward will have
* Whether all councillors are voted for by ward, or whether there is a

mix of ward and ‘at large’ councillors. Anyone can vote for an ‘at large’ candidate regardless of which electoral roll they are signed up to.

* Whether there are to be community boards in the city, where they might be, and what their membership arrangements are.

**Who can stand for election in a Māori Ward?**

To be eligible to stand for election in a Maori ward, 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 or more electors whose names appear on the electoral roll within the ward a candidate is standing Candidates in Māori Wards do not need to be of Māori descent, but they do need to be on the parliamentary electoral roll.

Candidates cannot stand for election in multiple wards (i.e. can’t stand in a general ward and a Māori ward at the same election). If some councillors are to be elected at large, candidates must choose if they will stand in a ward or for an “at large” vacancy.

**At election time who can vote for Māori Ward candidates?**

Only electors on the Māori electoral roll can vote for candidates from a Māori ward.

Electors on the general electoral roll cannot vote for candidates from a Māori ward.

Anyone can vote for “at large” positions, regardless of the electoral roll they are on.

**Who votes for the Mayor?**

The Mayor is elected ‘at large’ by all electors (eligible voters). This means all electors from general and Māori wards vote for the Mayor.

**Do Māori Ward elected members only represent Māori?**

No. The division into wards is for electoral purposes only. Once elected, all elected members, whether elected from general or Māori wards, take a formal oath or declaration of office to represent the entire community.

**How many Māori Ward councillors will there be?**

The number of councillors elected depends on a formula in the Local Electoral Act. The number of councillors is based on the Māori and general electoral populations of the city relative to the number of councillors. In Nelson, this will mean there will be one councillor from a Māori ward.

**Should I be on the Māori roll or the General roll?**

If you are of Māori descent, you can enrol in either the general or Māori electoral rolls.

If you are not of Māori descent, you can only enrol on the general electoral roll.

The cut-off date for joining the Māori electoral roll in time for the 2022 elections has now passed. This means that for the next Council elections, only those voters who are already on the Māori electoral roll will be able to vote in the Māori ward, and that voters on the Māori electoral roll will not be able to switch to the general roll. The roll is due to re-open in 2024.

You can find more information about the Māori Electoral Option on the [**Electoral Commission’s website**](https://www.elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/what-is-an-electoral-roll/what-is-the-maori-electoral-option/)