

Office of Hon Nanaia Mahuta

MP for Hauraki-Waikato

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister of Local Government

Associate Minister for Māori Development



21 May 2021

Kirsten Wise
Mayor of Napier
Napier City Council
mayor@napier.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Ms Wise

Thank you for your letter received on 12 May 2021 about the Local Electoral (Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act 2021.

I acknowledge that the time extension for making decisions on Māori wards, to 21 May 2021, did not provide a great deal of time for councils that are new to this kaupapa. The intended purpose of the time extension was to provide a window of opportunity for a fresh decision by those councils in a position to do so. I saw this as a fair solution given the significance of the changes to the Local Electoral Act 2001.

The time extension needed to be constrained because, as you noted, local authorities need enough time to complete their representation reviews after the decision is made on Māori wards. Further time extensions, including to the 21 May Māori wards deadline and the 8 September representation review deadline, will not be possible. This would require urgent legislative change, create uncertainty for other councils completing representation reviews, and leave insufficient time for appeals on final representation proposals to the Local Government Commission or High Court before the 2022 local elections.

The Government is planning to introduce further changes to the Local Electoral Act 2001 to better align the processes for establishing general wards and Māori wards. These changes are expected to be in place from late 2022 and are intended to support councils making decisions on Māori wards in the next term of local government.

I have encouraged councils to work with iwi, hapū, whanau and communities to make decisions about Māori wards in the time available. I know that councils are in different stages of their relationships with iwi and that this means different approaches will be taken by different councils. The second stage of legislative changes will ensure that a robust process for establishing Māori wards will be available for councils in the future as those relationships continue to evolve.

I know that you will be disappointed that the deadline for decisions on establishing Māori wards for the next triennial election cannot be extended further. However, I encourage your council to continue dialogue with your community on this issue to support a well-informed decision at the next opportunity to consider this.

Thank you again for writing.

Nāku noa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. C. Mahuta', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Minister of Local Government