

14 February 2025

By email to: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

## OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST 2025/02

On Tuesday 21 January 2025 you made a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA) for the following information:

1. *A detailed explanation of the procedures Stats NZ follows to verify that an individual is eligible to enrol to vote.*
2. *Information on whether Stats NZ collaborates or shares information with other government agencies (e.g., the Electoral Commission, Immigration New Zealand, or the Department of Internal Affairs) to confirm voter eligibility.*
3. *Clarification on what specific data sources or verification systems are used to validate citizenship, residency status, and other criteria required for enrolment.*
4. *Details on any safeguards Stats NZ has in place to prevent individuals who are not legally entitled to vote from enrolling.*
5. *Information on whether these safeguards and verification processes have changed over time.*

Statistics New Zealand are not involved in the enrolment or voting process, this is solely an Electoral Commission function. As most of the question relates to the Enrolment process, we have provided the response below.

1. *A detailed explanation of the procedures Stats NZ follows to verify that an individual is eligible to enrol to vote.*

A person is eligible to enrol and vote if they are 18 years or older, a New Zealand citizen or a permanent resident, and have lived in New Zealand continuously for 12 months or more.

For electoral purposes, a permanent resident is someone residing in New Zealand legally who is not required to leave within a specific time.

This includes someone who holds a valid resident or other type of visa if:

- they live in New Zealand
- their visa does not require them to leave New Zealand within a specified time
- they have lived in New Zealand continuously for 12 months or more at some point in their life
- they are in New Zealand legally

- they are not subject to sections 15 or 16 of the Immigration Act, for example if they have a conviction for certain offences or have been deported from New Zealand or another country.

If they hold a 2021 Resident Visa, and they meet the criteria above, they are eligible to enrol and vote in New Zealand.

If they are on a work or study visa that requires them to leave New Zealand by a certain date, they are not eligible to enrol and vote.

The Commission checks each enrolment with New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) for potentially unqualified voters, prior to them being included on the electoral roll. NZIS supplies the details of people who are in the country unlawfully or by virtue of a temporary permit, daily.

This is an automated process. Individuals at the Commission cannot manually access this information.

The person challenged can provide evidence to prove they are eligible to register on the electoral roll, either by:

- A. sending a photocopy of their evidence; or
- B. their evidence is provided face to face and sighted by a member of the processing team.

Please note that for electoral purposes, the definition of 'permanent resident' is different to the definition used by NZIS.

2. *Information on whether Stats NZ collaborates or shares information with other government agencies (e.g., the Electoral Commission, Immigration New Zealand, or the Department of Internal Affairs) to confirm voter eligibility.*

The Commission receives data from:

- Statistics NZ - statistical information which allows the Commission to determine enrolment numbers and helps determine the size of electorates
- Immigration NZ - list of potentially unqualified voters
- Department of Internal Affairs (Birth Deaths and Marriages) - notification of deaths and marriages in New Zealand
- Department of Corrections - notification of people who have been sentenced for more than 3 years.

For completeness, the law requires the Commission to give lists of people who are enrolled to vote to certain people and organisations when they ask for them.

These lists may contain personal information. This includes information that is not publicly available on the electoral rolls, such as the age range you are in and whether you are of Māori descent.

The following people and organisations can get lists of people who are enrolled to vote:

- Tūhono iwi affiliation service
- Local councils

- Ministry of Justice
- Political parties, candidates and MPs
- Stats NZ for statistical and research purposes under the Data and Statistics Act 2022
- State sector organisations for specific approved research purposes.

More information about applications for these lists by state sector organisations is available on our website: <https://elections.nz/stats-and-research/applications-for-roll-data/>

3. *Clarification on what specific data sources or verification systems are used to validate citizenship, residency status, and other criteria required for enrolment.*

As discussed above, the Commission uses NZIS to validate residency.

Once a person has been flagged, we do not request further information from other sources. The Commission will communicate with the individual directly to provide evidence, if they believe they qualify.

The type of evidence accepted includes, but is not limited to:

- Current Residence Permit
- Current Returning Residence Visa
- Other types of visa that allow the person to stay in New Zealand indefinitely
- Confirmation of Resident Status from the New Zealand Immigration Service
- New Zealand Passport
- Australian Passport
- Naturalisation Certificate
- Official Statement of Citizenship from the Department of Internal Affairs
- New Zealand, Cook Islands, Niue, or Tokelau Birth Certificate.

The key point is that any evidence must state that the person can remain in New Zealand indefinitely.

4. *Details on any safeguards Stats NZ has in place to prevent individuals who are not legally entitled to vote from enrolling.*

The Commission have an extensive quality assurance programme to ensure the accuracy and validity of enrolment and vote process.

All applications for new enrolments are checked to ensure that the mandatory information provided is accurate and valid. Any optional information provided is also taken into consideration when assessing the validity of the application.

These checks are undertaken by the Enrolment Officer using the information provided on the form and aided by the Commission's enrolment management system. Where there is a discrepancy, incomplete information, or a conflict in the information provided, the matter is immediately flagged for further investigation and clarification will be sought from the applicant before it is accepted as a valid application (except in very clear cases in which the application is rejected outright).

When checking the name and date of birth (DOB), the Enrolment Officer will look at historical information held by the Commission in relation to the applicant's previous enrolments, and as applicable, information from external sources such as NZIS and DIA.

When checking the residential address, the Enrolment Officer will check the enrolment database and/or external address information to ensure the address provided is valid and the type of dwelling at that address (e.g. residential property, rest home, military barracks).

If there is any conflict in other information provided, and there are previous enrolment records for the applicant, signatures are checked against previous documents.

The final verification step in the application process is that an acknowledgement letter is sent by post to the applicant at the address provided. If that correspondence cannot be delivered, and is returned 'gone no address', the Enrolment Officer knows that the elector is not eligible to enrol at the address and the application is investigated further to establish correct enrolment details. If that investigation does not result in establishing the correct details, the applicant is moved to the dormant roll.

Enrolment records are managed in the Commission's enrolment management system. Physical forms received by post are scanned and recorded in the system.

Reports are run on a monthly basis using the enrolment management system on variations of name, DOB and residential address to detect any potential duplicate entries on the roll. In high activity periods, these are run weekly.

A number of checks are built into the system to detect suspicious activity and automatically prompt Commission staff to investigate further.

The following notifications from other agencies are processed in the system daily:

- Disqualified prisoners list (section 81 of the Act)
- Notifications of deaths, marriages and civil unions and change of name (sections 92 to 94 of the Act)
- Immigration information (section 263A of the Act).

If at any stage, the Enrolment Officer is concerned about the validity of an enrolment, the Enrolment Officer will attempt to contact the elector and if necessary, arrange for formal notification to be served to the elector by personal delivery at the elector's address.

The Commission is required to keep an application for registration as an elector for at least two general elections since the record was made (section 124 of the Act). Electors' most recent valid applications for registration are used to produce the electoral rolls (which include the full name, residential address and occupation of electors for each district). The public can inspect the rolls, and a person also has a right to inspect their own application for registration as an elector (section 110 of the Act).

*5. Information on whether these safeguards and verification processes have changed over time.*



The Commission's methodology is focused on continued improvement. After every major event we undertake extensive reviews to ensure our quality assurance programmes remain fit for purpose.

In the interests of transparency, we release responses to Official Information Act requests every 3 months. We will publish this response with your personal details redacted.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Act to make a complaint to the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response to your request. Information about how to do this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



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