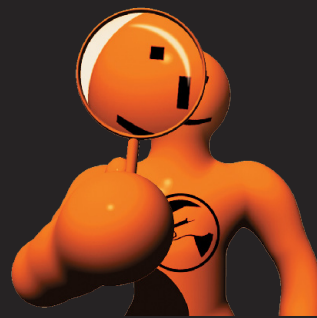


Media FAQs

2011 General Election
and Referendum



www.elections.org.nz

2011 General Election and Referendum – Questions and Answers

2011 General Election and Referendum on the Voting System

Election Day 2011 will take place on Saturday 26 November. There will be a Referendum at the same time as the 2011 General Election.

The Referendum gives New Zealanders the chance to have their say on the voting system we use to elect our parliaments in the future.

The Referendum will ask voters two questions. The first asks whether they want to keep MMP or change to another voting system.

The second question asks which of four other voting systems they would prefer if New Zealand decided to change from MMP.

Voters will be able to choose from MMP or four alternative voting systems – First Past the Post (FPP), Preferential Vote (PV), Supplementary Member (SM), and Single Transferable Vote (STV).

If at least half the voters opt to keep MMP, there will be an independent review of MMP in 2012 to recommend changes that should be made to the way it works. The Electoral Commission will conduct the review. It must include a number of matters that have been decided by Parliament including the thresholds parties must meet to be eligible for a share of list seats, whether voters should be able to change the order of candidates on a party list and whether candidates can stand in both an electorate and on the party list. The size of Parliament and Maori representation will not be reviewed, but the Commission may consider any other aspects of the MMP voting system.

If more than half the voters opt to change the voting system, Parliament will decide if there will be another Referendum in 2014 to choose between MMP and the alternative voting system that gets the most support in the second question in the 2011 Referendum.

More information about the Referendum, MMP, and the four alternative voting systems, will be available from the end of May.

Enrolling to Vote

Who can enrol to vote?

People must enrol if they:

- are 18 years or older, **and**
- have lived in New Zealand for more than one year continuously at some time in their life, **and**
- are a New Zealand citizen, **or**
- are a permanent resident of New Zealand*.

* Cook Island Maori, Niueans and Tokelauans can enrol once they have lived in New Zealand continuously for 12 months. They do not require permanent residency to be eligible to enrol and vote.

Is enrolling compulsory?

Yes. It is a legal requirement to enrol to be registered on the Parliamentary Electoral Roll. However, unlike in some countries, voting is not compulsory in New Zealand.

Which electorate should people enrol for?

The electorate where people last resided for one month or more. Those who have had to temporarily or occasionally move away from home for work or study, or because of a natural disaster, may still enrol at the address they call home even though they may have been away from this address for more than one month.

What can cause someone to be removed from the roll?

There are a number of circumstances that can cause someone to be removed from the roll, such as, death or being sentenced, following a criminal conviction, to serve a term of imprisonment.

The main reason people are removed from the roll is due to them changing the address of where they reside and not updating their details by re-enrolling.

How will Christchurch voters stay enrolled?

Christchurch voters need to ensure they keep their enrolment details up to date and if they've been displaced they should make arrangements to have their mail forwarded to them. Information will be sent to all enrolled voters of Christchurch and surrounding towns on 30 May with their enrolment update pack. A specific enrolment communications program for Cantabrians will also be launched in early June. For detailed information on where displaced Cantabrians should enrol visit www.elections.org.nz/enrolment/cantabrians-you-can-still-have-your-say

How do you enrol?

Enrolling to vote is easy. Simply fill in an enrolment form. Enrolment forms are available by calling 0800 36 76 56, freetexting name and address to 3676, from www.elections.org.nz or at PostShops. People can also enrol online, but will be required to sign the enrolment form.

Voting

Who can vote in the election?

Anyone eligible who is enrolled by 25 November, the day before Election Day can vote in the election. Voters who enrol by Wednesday 26 October will receive an EasyVote information pack about a week before the election. The pack will include voting information along with an EasyVote card. Voters are encouraged to take their EasyVote card with them on Election Day as it will make voting easier.

Enrolment forms are available by calling 0800 36 76 56, freetexting name and address to 3676, from www.elections.org.nz or at PostShops. People can also enrol online, but will be required to sign the enrolment form.

How can people find out what electorate they are in?

People can check their enrolment details at www.elections.org.nz which will tell them what electorate they are enrolled in. Maps of all electorates are available on the website. People can also check the electoral rolls at all PostShops and public libraries.

What about people who will be away from home at the time of the election?

Voters who will be away in the period starting Wednesday 9 November or who can't get to a polling place on Election Day can vote in advance. Information on advance voting places will be available from Wednesday 2 November by calling 0800 35 76 56 or visiting www.elections.org.nz. This information will also be in the EasyVote information pack that will be sent to enrolled voters in the week before Election Day.

Where can people go to get information about polling places?

A list of polling places will be available from Wednesday 2 November from the elections website www.elections.org.nz, by calling 0800 36 76 56, or in the EasyVote information pack sent to all voters who are enrolled.

What happens if people don't receive an EasyVote card? Can they still vote?

People who don't receive an EasyVote card can still vote as long as they are enrolled by 25 November. On Election Day, people can still vote without their EasyVote card, but it will take longer.

How many polling places will there be?

There will be approximately 2,700 polling places for the election.

Overseas Voting

What happens if people are overseas at the time?

People who are overseas during the election can still vote. Voters going overseas can cast an advance vote before they go in the period starting Wednesday 9 November.

Voters who will be overseas during the voting period can download voting papers from the elections website www.elections.org.nz or pick up voting papers from overseas posts. A list of participating overseas posts will be available at the website or by calling 0800 36 76 56.

Can overseas voters vote electronically?

No, overseas voters cannot vote electronically or return their votes by email. But they can return their voting papers by fax to +64 4 494 2300.

Election and Referendum Results

When will the election and referendum results be announced?

Preliminary results will be released progressively from 7pm on www.electionresults.govt.nz.

Targets for release:

by 8.30pm	all advance votes
by 10.00pm	results from 50% of polling places
by 11.30pm	results from 100% of polling places.

These are *targets*, not guarantees.

Referendum voting papers will not be counted in polling places on election night to avoid delays to the release of the general election results, but preliminary results of advance referendum ordinary votes will be released progressively on election night from 7.30pm.

The official results are expected to be declared by 2.00pm Saturday 10 December.

Where can we get the results from?

Election results will be available progressively and in real time from 7pm on 26 November at www.electionresults.govt.nz.

Candidates and Parties

Who can be a candidate?

Candidates must be enrolled as a voter and be a New Zealand citizen. Candidates do not need to be enrolled in the electorate they are seeking election for.

How does the nomination process work?

There are two ways that electorate candidates are nominated:

Bulk nominations – registered political parties can nominate all the candidates representing the party at one time by lodging a bulk nomination schedule with the Electoral Commission. (This system is used by most registered parties).

Individual nominations – individual nominations can be made by two voters in the electorate lodging an individual nomination paper with the electorate Returning Officer.

List candidates are nominated by registered political parties supplying a party list to the Electoral Commission.

When is the deadline for nominations?

Electorate candidates must be nominated by:

- noon on Monday 31 October – for bulk nominations to the Electoral Commission
- noon on Tuesday 1 November – for individual nominations to the Returning Officer for the electorate.

Party lists must be supplied by:

- noon on Tuesday 1 November to the Electoral Commission.

When will the candidates be announced?

Candidates for the general election will be announced by 2.00pm Wednesday 2 November.

Campaign Rules

What process will the Electoral Commission take in relation to advertising and expenditure complaints?

The Electoral Commission will consider complaints regarding party, candidate and third party advertising. The Electoral Commission will not discuss the specifics of a complaint or issue while it is being considered.

The Electoral Commission provides general guidance to parties, candidates and third parties, both in hard copy and on www.elections.org.nz.

The Electoral Commission encourages candidates, parties, and third parties to contact it if they have any questions about the application of the election or referendum advertising and expenditure rules to activities they are planning.

General rules regarding election advertising and expenditure

All election advertisements must state the name and address of the promoter. The promoter is the person who has initiated or instigated the advertisement.

Parties and electorate candidates may only broadcast an election programme on radio or television from Wednesday 26 October to Friday 25 November. The regulated period for election expenses starts on 26 August and ends on 25 November 2011.

The maximum amount of an electorate candidate's election expenses during the regulated period is \$25,000 including GST.

Candidate election expenses are the costs of advertising in any medium undertaken between Friday 26 August 2011 and Friday 25 November 2011 that:

- may reasonably be regarded as either encouraging voters to vote for the candidate, or discouraging voters from voting for another candidate, or both; and
- is promoted by the candidate or any person authorised by the candidate.

Candidates have to disclose candidate donations of more than \$1,500.

Candidates will be required to file a return of candidate election expenses and donations by 26 March 2012.

Further information about the rules is in the Candidate Handbook – 2011 General Election and Referendum.

The maximum amount of a party's election expenses during the regulated period is \$1,032,000 plus \$25,000 per electorate contested by the party including GST. Please note that this figure will change on 1 July 2011.

Party election expenses are the costs of advertising in any medium undertaken between Friday 26 August 2011 and Friday 25 November 2011 that:

- may reasonably be regarded as either encouraging voters to vote for the party, or discouraging voters from voting for another party, or both; and
- is promoted by the party secretary or any person authorised by the party secretary.

Parties have to disclose party donations of more than \$15,000.

Parties must file a return of their donations annually by 30 April for the previous calendar year.

Parties must file a return of party election expenses by 16 March 2012.

Further information about the rules is in the Party Secretary Handbook – 2011 General Election and Referendum,

Third parties must register with the Electoral Commission if they will spend more than \$12,000 including GST during the regulated period.

The maximum amount of a third party's election expenses during the regulated period is \$300,000 including GST.

Third party election expenses are the costs of advertising in any medium undertaken between Friday 26 August 2011 and Friday 25 November 2011 that:

- may reasonably be regarded as either encouraging voters to vote or not vote for a candidate, party, or type of candidate or party described by reference to views or positions that are, or are not, held or taken; and

is promoted by the third party. Third parties must file a return of their election expenses by 26 March 2012 if they spend more than \$100,000 including GST.

Further information about the rules is in the Third Party Handbook – 2011 General Election and Referendum.

General rules regarding referendum advertising and expenditure

A referendum advertisement is an advertisement in any medium that may reasonably be regarded as encouraging or persuading voters to vote, or not to vote, in a particular way in the referendum.

All referendum advertisements must state the name and address of the promoter. The promoter is the person who has initiated or instigated the advertisement.

The regulated period for referendum expenses starts on 26 August and ends on 25 November 2011.

Promoters of referendum advertisements must register with the Electoral Commission if they intend to spend more than \$12,000 including GST during the regulated period. Registered promoters cannot spend more than \$300,000 including GST during the regulated period.

Registered promoters who spend more than \$100,000 on referendum advertisements published during the regulated period will have to file a return of referendum expenses by 26 March 2012.

What activity is allowed on Election Day?

Campaigning on Election Day is a criminal offence

The Electoral Act prohibits campaigning of any kind on Election Day. The general intention of the Electoral Act is to leave voters alone from midnight until 7pm on Election Day so they can vote without interference.

It is a criminal offence to distribute or broadcast any statement that is likely to influence a voter as to the candidate/party/referendum option the voter should or shouldn't vote for, or which influences people to abstain from voting.

News media can broadcast a statement having direct or indirect reference to the 2011 General Election and Referendum, for example, a news item noting that it is Election Day and when results will be available. However, news items must not include any words or visual images that are likely to influence voters about how they should vote. Care should be taken with any items that show any candidates or include interviews with any candidates. If in any doubt, broadcasters should delay broadcasting the item until after the polls close at 7pm.

On Election Day, candidates, political parties and others must:

- Cover up or take down all election signs.
- Cover up or place away from public view vehicles advertising parties or candidates (this includes bumper stickers).
- Not distribute any campaign material.
- Not distribute or display anything showing political party or candidate names.
- Not post any new material on websites. Election material does not have to be removed from a website on Election Day as long as the material is only made available to people who voluntarily access it. Advertisements promoting the website must not be published on Election Day.
- Not display clothing (such as T-shirts) promoting a party or candidate.

Parties, party supporters, candidates and referendum option proponents may

- Wear party lapel badges (including rosettes) in public bearing the party's name, emblem, slogan or logo (but not the candidate's name).
- Wear referendum lapel badges (including rosettes) in public bearing the name of the group, and an emblem slogan or logo relating to the referendum
- Display streamers, rosettes, ribbons and similar items in party colours on people or vehicles.
- Contact voters to offer help to get to a polling place. They must not say or do anything that influences voters as to the party or candidate or referendum option they should or should not vote for.
- Display fixed signs exhibited before polling day on party headquarters including party names, slogans or logos that do not relate specifically to the election campaign can stay.
- Keep election material on a website on Election Day as long as the material is only made available to people who voluntarily access it. New material must not be posted on the website on Election Day. Advertisements promoting the website must not be published on Election Day.

Scrutineers

Scrutineers may be appointed by candidates to observe in polling places and during the preliminary count. Scrutineers may wear party lapel badges. They must not communicate with voters. When the electoral official reads out from the electoral roll the line and page number of the voter the scrutineer is entitled to record this.

Media Activity on Election Day

All election and referendum advertising and other statements, by anybody including the media, which could influence voters cannot be published or broadcast on Election Day. For this purpose newspapers published after 6pm on the day before Election Day are treated as being published on Election Day.

No opinion polling of voters can be carried out on Election Day.

News stories posted on websites before Election Day can remain, as long as the website is not advertised on Election Day.

Photo/filming opportunities on Election Day

Candidates may only be in a polling place for the purpose of voting.

Media organisations can take photos or film at a polling place as long as:

- The Returning Officer approves. Media must contact the Electoral Commission before Election Day to arrange this.
- No photographs or footage is taken of voters actually completing their ballot papers or showing how a person voted. Media cannot go behind the voting screens.
- Photographers or camera crews do not disrupt voters from voting, or officials from their duties.
- No undue delays are caused to voters.
- No interviews are conducted in or near the polling place



ELECTORAL COMMISSION
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

Media Contacts

Anastasia (Stasi) Turnbull is the first point of contact for all media enquiries around the 2011 general election, referendum and by-elections.

Murray Wicks at the Electoral Enrolment Centre is the primary point of contact for enrolment matters.

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