



Election Year Issues

THE FUTURE OF THE MAORI SEATS

Are Maori seats being used to undermine democracy? Is it time for one electoral roll?

The Mana Party

The Mana Party has done a \$3 million *cash-for-Maori seat* deal to coat-tail the Internet Party into Parliament.

TV3's Patrick Gower's had this to say:

The Hone-Dotcom-Laila political triangle is one of the dirtiest deals in New Zealand political history. They are using Harawira's seat and MMP's "coat-tail" rule to get a back-door entry into Parliament. It is a rort. It is a grubby deal, made all the worse by the fact Harawira holds the Te Tai Tokerau seat – a Maori seat. Never, ever was it envisaged they would be used as a back-door entry for a German millionaire to get his proxy into Parliament.

The Maori Party

Meanwhile, the Maori Party, pushing the agenda of the iwi elite, is planning to force local authorities around the country to appoint iwi members onto councils with voting rights – if they gain the balance of power at the election. Since such representatives would not be accountable to the local community and could not be removed from office, this would undermine representative democracy and the principle of one-person-one-vote.

Leader, Te Ururoa Flavell wants these representatives to have the power to authorise the Waitangi Day flying of the tino rangatiratanga flag. He favours arrangements similar to the Auckland Council's Independent Maori Statutory Board:

We're looking at trying to have more effective Maori representation at the highest level, pretty much along the lines of the Auckland statutory board whereby there is a need that Maori have a space at that council table and all the resources that go with that.

Why do we have Maori seats?

Four Maori seats were introduced as a temporary measure in 1867, to give voting rights to Maori men, who didn't qualify to vote under the private property requirements of the day. Non-Maori men didn't gain voting rights until 1879, when male suffrage was adopted. The Maori seats should have been abolished then – or in 1893 when universal suffrage was adopted.

Do we still need Maori seats?

The 1986 Royal Commission on the Electoral System recommended the Maori seats should be abolished if MMP was introduced. Instead they were retained and tied to the Maori electoral roll. As a result, the number of seats has increased from four to 7, leading to an over over-representation of Maori in Parliament – as predicted.

A single electoral roll

There's now a public expectation that the Maori seats will be removed once Treaty settlements are completed. With South Island claims now settled, and the remainder scheduled over the next three years, Election 2017 could be the first election in almost 150 years where all New Zealanders will be on the same electoral roll.

In election year - public opinion matters more than ever. What you can do!

- Contact MPs and new candidates – in person, if possible – and put the case for abolishing the Maori seats and introducing a single electoral roll. Ask for their party's support.
- Contact local body councillors, pointing out the potential threat to democracy if race-based representation is forced on them.
- Talk to friends and colleagues and ask them to help with the campaign.
- Spread the message – write letters to the Editor, call talkback radio, engage in social media.

For more information, please visit the NZCPR.com think tank website to support this campaign, sign the petition, and register for the free weekly newsletter to keep informed.