

Simplifying Local Government

Frequently asked questions

What is the Government proposing?

The Government is proposing to simplify local government by replacing regional councillors with a new governance board. There are five options for you to consider:

- **Combined Territories Board (CTB):** City and district mayors come together to make collective decisions for the benefit of the whole region (the preferred option).
- **CTB plus Crown Commissioner – Observer only:** In addition to the mayors (who are voting members), a Crown Commissioner would be appointed to the CTB as a non-voting member.
- **CTB plus Crown Commissioner – Veto power:** In addition to the mayors (who are voting members), a Crown Commissioner would be appointed to the CTB. The Crown Commissioner would be able to override CTB decisions.
- **CTB plus Crown Commissioner – Majority vote:** In addition to the mayors, a Crown Commissioner would be appointed to the CTB. The Crown Commissioner would hold a majority of the votes on the board. The remaining votes would be distributed among the mayors.
- **Crown Commissioners:** The Government appoints a board of Commissioners to provide the regional governance role. City and district mayors continue their existing roles.

The Government's preferred option for the new governance board is to establish CTBs comprised of city and district mayors without Crown Commissioners.

The Government wants your feedback on this proposal. Your feedback will help the Government decide which option to progress and consider refinements to the proposal before it makes any final decisions.

Why is this change being considered?

Most regions currently have two sets of councillors: regional and city/district. That means:

- More bureaucracy
- More confusion

This proposal aims to:

- Make local government easier to understand
 - Reduce duplication
 - Deliver better value for ratepayers.
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What will the new regional governance board do?

The proposal is that existing regional council functions are transferred to the new governance board. This includes:

- Environmental protection
- Transport planning
- Civil defence and emergency management.

Establishing a **Combined Territories Board** is the Government's preferred option. If this option is progressed, mayors will work together to collectively manage the regional council's functions.

Alternative options are for the Combined Territories Board to be supported by Crown Commissioners, or for Crown Commissioners to be the new governance board without any elected representatives. No matter which option is progressed the role of the new governance board will be the same.

The new governance board would also develop a **Regional Reorganisation Plan** to improve how all the councils in a region work together in the future. This might include combining some councils or just joining up services across the region (like rubbish and recycling).

My mayor is already really busy. How will they have the time to do this as well?

If a Combined Territories Board is established, mayors would be able to delegate to councillors. For example, councillors could have roles on Combined Territories Board committees. Their roles and remuneration would be adjusted to reflect the new responsibilities.

Mayors' roles would stay the same if a Combined Territories Board is not established and regional councillors are replaced by Crown Commissioners.

What would Crown Commissioners do?

The Government's preferred option is to establish a Combined Territories Board without Crown Commissioners. There are three alternative options where the Combined Territories Board would be supported in their decision-making by Crown Commissioners.

Historically Crown Observers or Crown Commissioners are appointed when a council has a governance problem. In this case, the Government is considering proactively appointing Crown Commissioners as a form of assistance – not intervention.

Under the different options, Crown Commissioners could be observers only (non-voting), hold veto power over Combined Territories Board decisions, or have a majority of the voting power on the Combined Territories Board. They would be appointed by the Government.

Under each of the options with Crown Commissioners, regardless of the voting power Crown Commissioners have, they would contribute to discussions and support mayors in their decision-making.

Adding a Crown Commissioner to the Combined Territories Board is an option that could enhance the roles of mayors by potentially bringing additional skills, experience or knowledge for collective decision-making.

Will my city or district council change?

Your city or district council stays the same for now, no matter which new regional governance arrangements are progressed.

In the future, changes to your council structure might be proposed as part of the Regional Reorganisation Plans.

You will be consulted on any changes.

What happens to regional councillors?

Under all options, regional councillors would no longer be elected. Their terms would end when the new governance arrangements come into effect.

How will smaller communities be represented?

In the Government's preferred option, mayors on the Combined Territories Board would have voting power that reflects their community's population, but it would be adjusted to ensure smaller and rural communities still have a strong voice. An independent agency (the Local Government Commission) would oversee this to ensure fairness.

Is this centralising power?

No. This is about local leaders making regional decisions.

The option to appoint Crown Commissioners instead of a Combined Territories Board seeks community feedback on whether this option provides better benefits than other options. The Government's preferred option at this stage is to establish a Combined Territories Board.

Will this affect services like water, transport, or emergency response?

Under the proposal, these services would continue, just with better coordination. The goal is to improve how councils work together, not cut services.

How will this work with Resource Management reforms underway?

Establishing Combined Territories Boards will support Resource Management reform. The establishment timing is expected to be lined up so that the new Combined Territories Boards will lead key milestones in the new planning and environmental management system.

What about rates capping?

Rates capping remains part of the broader policy agenda. The new governance board will be funded by regional rates. Any changes to rates policy will be considered alongside this reform to ensure consistency and value for ratepayers.

What about Treaty settlements?

The Government is committed to upholding Treaty settlements.

Under the proposal, all existing Treaty settlement obligations that are administered by regional councils would remain unchanged. This includes Māori participation on council committees and joint management agreements as provided for in Treaty settlements.

Broader obligations for regional councils to provide opportunities for Māori to participate in local government decision-making under the Local Government Act 2002 would also remain unchanged.

What does the proposal mean for Māori representation and Māori constituencies?

Under the proposal, regional councillors would no longer exist. This includes any councillors elected by general and Māori constituencies. Recent poll decisions to retain Māori constituencies from 2028 onwards for two regional councils would not be implemented.

The legislation that applies specifically for Bay of Plenty Regional Council would no longer apply.

What does the proposal mean for Ngāi Tahu appointees on Environment Canterbury?

Under the proposal, regional councillors will no longer exist. This includes councillors appointed through the Canterbury Regional Council (Ngāi Tahu Representation) Act 2022.

Will regional decisions and meetings still be transparent and open to the public?

Yes. The existing rules under the Local Government Act, Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act, and Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act will apply.

How is voting on CTBs proposed to work?

Determining how many votes a CTB member gets is challenging. The “one mayor, one vote” system enables small communities to have a collective, outsized influence over the majority of the population. For example, in a 5-mayor CTB, 3 mayors of small towns would out vote 2 mayors of large cities. But assigning voting power on pure population means that in some places, a single mayor could have all the power if more than half of the population lives in their city.

The proposal is that voting power will be allocated in a way that reflects the population a mayor represents **but** is adjusted by the Local Government Commission so communities receive effective representation. Effective representation basically means that all communities should have a voice in regional decisions.

How can I have my say?

This is a **draft proposal**, and the Government wants your feedback before making any final decisions.

You can fill out a short online survey or upload a written submission. We recommend using the survey to make sure your submission covers everything. You can answer as many or as few questions as you like.

Visit our [website](#) to get started.

More frequently asked questions might be added to this page in the future. This version was last updated on 27 November 2025.