

S O L G M

NZ SOCIETY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS



CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

For the Management of Local Authority
Elections and Polls

Part 10 Elector Information and Education

Produced by the
SOLGM Electoral Working Party

Contents

Introduction	3
Objective	3
Legislative requirements	3
Recommended practices	4
Appendix A: Multi-lingual translations	7

Introduction

10.1 The principles in section 4 of the Act have been designed to ensure that all qualified persons have a reasonable and equal opportunity to:

- cast an informed vote;
- nominate 1 or more candidates;
- accept nomination as a candidate;

and have confidence in, and an understanding of, local electoral processes.

Objective

To ensure that electoral officers understand and implement electoral rights for elections and polls.

Legislative requirements

10.2 The key provisions relating to the rights of electors at an election or poll are:

Local Electoral Act 2001

Section 4	Principles
Section 20	Right to vote in election or poll
Section 21	Special voting
Section 22	Voting by special voters
Section 23	Residential electors
Section 24	Ratepayer electors
Section 24A	Electors of Maori Wards
Section 24B	Voting rights at triennial general election of territorial authority
Section 24C	Voting rights at election to fill extraordinary vacancy in respect of Maori ward
Section 24D	Electors of Maori constituencies
Section 24E	Voting rights at triennial general election of regional council
Section 24F	Voting rights at election to fill extraordinary vacancy in respect of Maori constituency
Section 25	Candidate qualifications
Section 26	Right to nominate candidate
Section 52	Notice of election or poll
Section 53	Additional material to be included in notice in respect of election
Section 65	Further notice to electors of election or poll

Local Electoral Regulations 2001

Schedule 1	Enrolment form for ratepayer electors
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Recommended practices

Elector enrolment information

10.3 The Act provides for two categories of elector:

- residential electors, general and Maori; and
- ratepayer electors.

and establishes the enrolment processes for each. People seeking enrolment need to know which categories apply in each case and how to ensure they get on the right roll in the right category. While for the majority of electors the process is activated automatically when they enrol as a parliamentary elector, local authorities should have available, at all times, information to help people understand the enrolment process. The preparation of enrolment information should be done in collaboration with local Registrars of Electors and the Electoral Enrolment Centre (EEC).

- 1 Recommended good practice is for electoral officers to collaborate with Registrars of Electors in their area and the EEC to prepare enrolment information and to make it available through all offices and public libraries and on the local authority's web site.**

Elector voting rights

10.4 The Act gives every registered elector the right to vote at elections and polls conducted in the local authority area in which the elector is enrolled. However, the division of local authority areas into wards, constituencies, communities, and subdivisions together with the variety of election issues being conducted at the same time, can make it very confusing for individual electors to understand the particular issues in which they are entitled to vote. It is important, therefore, for electoral officers to provide information to help individual electors understand their voting entitlement.

10.5 The voting entitlements referred to in 10.4 above may also apply to people not registered as electors but who apply to enrol up to the day before the close of voting. This can occur where a person becomes qualified to enrol after the close of the electoral roll and before the close of voting. In such cases, the elector will be given a special vote.

10.6 An elector is also entitled to a special vote if their entitlement is incorrectly recorded on the electoral roll or if because of some other administrative error, his or her name or other information is incorrectly recorded on the electoral roll.

- 2 Recommended good practice is for electoral officers to ensure that information about voting entitlements is available for the public at offices and public libraries and on the local authority's web site.**

Meet the candidate events

10.7 After the close of nominations to help electors understand why candidates have been nominated for election, a practice followed in many areas is to hold “meet the candidate” events where candidates have an opportunity to state why they have been nominated and electors have the chance to ask questions of the candidates. These events are not necessarily arranged by local authorities but by independent groups as a public service. Some local authorities prefer to remain remote from “meet the candidate” events to ensure a certain level of independence to avoid the potential for conflict both before and after election day.

3 Recommended good practice is for local authorities to encourage and support other organisations to conduct meet the candidate events in preference to direct involvement and take steps to protect their neutrality to avoid any potential conflict with any candidate.

National advertising campaigns

10.8 Some of the advertising requirements in the Act can be undertaken on a multi-authority basis either regionally or nationally. In addition the EEC may undertake a national advertising campaign, both print and television, to encourage people to enrol. The opportunity exists for a lead agency, such as Local Government New Zealand, Department of Internal Affairs or the SOLGM Electoral Working Party, in consultation with the EEC and local authorities, to undertake a national advertising campaign to fulfil some of the statutory advertising requirements. This should produce cost economies and also result in a more uniform and coordinated approach to certain aspects of the election process e.g. electoral roll requirements, election notices, nominations.

4 Recommended good practice is for local authorities to take full advantage of any opportunity to participate in regional or national advertising campaigns.

Multi-lingual information

10.9 Almost all local authorities have adopted the practice at previous elections of providing translations with the voting documents of the ‘Directions to Voter’ in several languages – New Zealand Maori, Cook Island Maori, Samoan, Tongan, and Mandarin. Examples from the 2004 elections are contained in Appendix A to this Part of the Code and are suitably updated for the 2007 elections.

10.10 Given the diversity between local authorities in terms of significant ethnic populations, the range of multi-lingual translations required will vary between authorities. However, given that New Zealand Maori is an official language, it is appropriate for all local authorities to seriously consider at least providing the information in the Appendix translated into New Zealand Maori. Whether translations to other languages are necessary would require consideration by each electoral officer based on the diversity and size of various ethnic

groups within his/her local government area. Translations were provided at the 2004 election by the mailhouses, thereby relieving each local authority of arranging for their own translation.

10.11 Where electoral officers receive requests for help to translate information on voting documents and information releases they can refer the enquirer to the Office of Ethnic Affairs, Language Line. This is a telephone interpreting service for people struggling with English. The contact phone number is 04 495 9448 and the web site address is www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz.

5 Recommended good practice is that, in light of the principle in section 4(1)(b) of the Act, electoral officers:

- (i) seriously consider including with the voting documents a translation into New Zealand Maori of the information contained in Appendix A to this Part of the Code; and**
- (ii) consider whether such information should be translated into other languages for the benefit of electors of other ethnic groups and included with the voting documents; and**
- (iii) refer requests for help to understand English to Ethnic Affairs Language Line.**

Examples of Multi-lingual Translations of Information to Voters from the 2004 Local Authority Elections (amended to relate to the 2007 Elections)

Wellington City

Through Datamail, Wellington City provided a translation of the following “Directions to Voter” in the following languages: New Zealand Maori, Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Maori, Nuiean/Tokelau, and Mandarin.

“DIRECTIONS TO VOTER (read carefully before voting)

- 1 Write “√” in the circle(s) immediately after the name of the candidate(s) for whom you wish to vote.
- 2 You must not vote for more than the number of candidates to be elected for each issues as shown below.
- 3 After voting, fold the voting document and seal it in the enclosed envelope addressed to the electoral officer.
- 4 Post or deliver the envelope to the electoral officer or any deputy electoral officer.
- 5 The voting document must be in the hands of the electoral officer before 12 noon on Saturday, 13 October 2007.
- 6 If you spoil this voting document, you may return it to the Officer who issued it and apply for a special voting document.”

Manukau City

Through Datamail, Manukau City provided a translation of the information below with the voting documents in the following languages: Samoan, Tongan, New Zealand Maori and Mandarin.

Your Voting Document

It is personal to you. Do not mix it with another voter’s documents. Voting documents are sent to all persons whose names appear on the Electoral Rolls.

When Ready to Vote

Read the instructions on your voting document carefully. Complete your voting document alone and secretly. Fold the voting document and place it in the freepost envelope with the electoral officer’s name and address showing through the window. Do not include voting documents from any other voter.

Seal and Return

Voting documents must reach the electoral officer by 12 noon Saturday 13 October 2007. If mailing your voting document locally it is recommended that it be posted no later than 5.00 pm Thursday 11 October 2007 to ensure delivery on time.

Spoilt Voting Documents

If you spoil your voting document in any way, you should contact the electoral officer and a special voting document will be issued as a replacement.

Unmarked Voting Documents

If for any reason you decide not to vote, destroy the voting document and dispose of it carefully.

Help with your Voting Document

Electors with impaired sight, unable to read or write, or unfamiliar with English, may seek the assistance of another elector to mark their voting document.

Queries or Comments

Any queries or comments regarding this election contact the electoral officer, details located at the top of the voting document.

VOTING DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE RETURNED IMMEDIATELY AND MUST BE IN THE HANDS OF THE ELECTORAL OFFICE BEFORE 12 NOON SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER 2007”