

2013/14 Representation Commission Questions and Answers

1. What is the Representation Commission?

The Representation Commission is an independent body convened after every population census and Māori Electoral Option to review and redraw the Parliamentary electorate boundaries.

2. When will the Representation Commission start reviewing the electorate boundaries?

The Commission starts its work 16 October 2013 and will release its proposed boundaries for public comment on Thursday 21 November 2013.

3. Why are the electorate boundaries being redrawn?

Electorate boundaries are redrawn after each population Census to make sure that the number of people in each electorate reflects changes in population and that electorate names remain relevant.

Because of changes to the population between each Census, approximately half of existing electorates are either over or under-populated and many changes to boundaries will result.

4. What is the process for making decisions on the proposed boundaries?

Statistics New Zealand calculates the average population size for electorates following the Census and Māori Electoral Option. The Representation Commission uses these electoral populations to review and redraw electorate boundaries.

The public can make objections and counter objections to the proposed names and boundaries as part of the Representation Commission's consultation process.

5. How many electorates will there be?

The Government Statistician will release the number of electorates and the electoral populations for the North Island, South Island and Māori electorates on 7 October 2013.

6. What other criteria apply to deciding on the proposed boundaries?

To arrive at the required electoral population, the Representation Commission uses the following criteria to decide each of the electorate boundaries:

- Existing electorate boundaries
- Community of interest
- Communications facilities – including links such as roads and telephone services
- Topographical features – such as mountains and rivers
- Projected variations in electoral populations – particularly large regional changes expected within five years.

In respect of Māori electorates, the Representation Commission uses the above criteria and also takes into account tribal affiliations when deciding the electorate boundaries.

7. How will changes to the number of electorates impact on the size of Parliament?

There are currently 70 electorates – 63 General electorates and seven Māori electorates. The number of electorates may change for the 2014 and 2017 general elections.

The overall size of Parliament will not change, however the number of list seats will if there are any changes to the number of electorates.

8. When will the proposed boundaries be released for public comment?

The Representation Commission will release proposed electorate boundaries for public comment on Thursday 21 November 2013. Objections must be received by 10am Monday 23 December 2013.

9. How do people have their say?

Anyone can make an objection to the proposed boundaries. There is also an opportunity to make a counter objection. Objections must be received by 10am Monday 23 December 2013. People can make an objection online at www.elections.org.nz or write in and make an objection. The Commission will release a summary of objections on 14 January 2014. Counter objections must be received by 5pm Wednesday 29 January 2014. People can make a counter objection online at www.elections.org.nz or write in and make a counter objection.

10. When will the boundaries be finalised?

Final electorate boundaries for the 2014 and 2017 general elections will be released on Thursday 17 April.

11. When will the new electorate boundaries be used?

The electorate boundaries will be used for the next two general elections. If a by-election is held before the next general election the existing boundaries will be used.

12. Who is on the Representation Commission?

The 2013 Representation Commission members are:

- Chairperson, Judge Bernard Kendall
- Government Representative, Hon Roger Sowry
- Opposition Representative, Hon Pete Hodgson
- Chief Electoral Officer, Robert Peden
- Deputy Surveyor General, Anselm Haanen
- Deputy Government Statistician, Vince Galvin
- Chairperson, Local Government Commission, Basil Morrison

When considering the Māori electorate boundaries the membership also includes:

- Government Representative (Māori), Dan Te Kanawa
- Opposition Representative (Māori), Whetu Wereta
- Chief Executive, Te Puni Kōkiri, Michelle Hippolite

13. What are the key dates for the 2013/14 Representation Commission?

16 October	Representation Commission begins meeting to set proposed electorate boundaries
21 November 2013	Proposed boundaries released
21 November – 23 December 2013	Objections (public submissions) on proposed boundaries received
14 January 2014	Representation Commission releases summary of objections received
14 – 29 January 2014	Counter objections received
7-19 February 2014	Public hearings of objections and counter objections
17 April 2014	Final electorate boundaries published

14. What impact do Representation Commission decisions have?

The Representation Commission determines where the boundaries of electorates are located. In doing so, the Commission must ensure that the electoral population for each electorate is within +/- 5% of the population quota for that electorate.

For some voters, a change to the boundaries may mean that the electorate a voter lives in changes. If so, the voter may find that the candidates standing to become members of Parliament in their new electorate may be different to the candidates standing in their previous electorate.

The Representation Commission also needs to ensure that the names of electorates are current and reflect the communities within them. For the voter, this may mean that the name of their electorate changes, even if they are not affected by changes to boundaries.

15. What happened at the last boundary review?

The last boundary review was held in 2007. A new electorate, Botany, was established in east Auckland and major changes were made to create the Papakura, Hunua, Waikato, Ōhāriu, Selwyn, Port Hills, Rangitata, Waitaki and Hauraki-Waikato electorates. No boundary changes were made in seven electorates and nine electorates received new names. Macrons were applied to eleven electorate names to assist with correct Māori pronunciation.

During the 2007 Representation Commission 331 objections and 114 counter-objections were received. In addition, a number of petitions were received for different electorates with almost 2,000 signatures.

The average size (of quota) of electoral districts was:

- 57,243 people for North Island general electorates
- 57,562 people for South Island general electorates
- 59,583 people for Māori electorates