



Civic participation

Civic participation is all about being actively involved in the democratic process, whether it's by voting in referenda and elections, attending and speaking at public meetings, making submissions on public consultations and more.

Democracy and you

By voting in the local elections, you are playing a vital role in the democratic process and having your voice heard on issues that affect Auckland and your local community.

What is democracy

You have probably heard the term 'democracy' used a lot, so let's start by looking at the word itself.

The word 'democracy' comes from the Greek word 'demos', meaning 'citizen', and 'kratos', meaning 'power'.

So, when these two are joined together we learn that democracy means "citizen power", which you could also think of as 'people power'.

Democracy



Power to the people

Democracy is a form of government where the people of a nation have the power to decide who will represent them and which laws they will live by.

Democracy in Aotearoa

Here in New Zealand, we have a form of representative democracy. That means that we decide who we want to represent us and our interests when decisions are made, at the local and central government level.

In democracies, we select representatives (aka politicians) through the elections process.

Use your voice in elections and referenda

Elections give you the opportunity to vote for your preferred candidates who can act on your behalf when it comes to decision making.

Although it's not compulsory, voting plays a vital role in democracy and is a fundamental act of civic participation.

Referenda

A referendum question asks people to vote on a particular idea or decision. The results may lead to the adoption of a new law. A binding referendum requires the result to be implemented (acted on) whereas an indicative referendum does not. All enrolled voters in New Zealand can take part in a referendum by post or in person.

Binding referenda

The Flag Referendum in 2015 asked New Zealanders to rank five proposed designs of a potential new flag. The 2016 Referendum asked people to choose between the current flag and the winning design from the first referendum. The vote was binding so the flag did not change.



Indicative referenda

The Firefighters Referendum 1995 asked how many firefighters New Zealand should have. The results were provided as a recommendation to central government and used to inform MP's in their decision-making process.

Citizens-initiated vs government-initiated referenda

Anyone can start a petition for a nationwide referendum known as a citizens-initiated referendum. For a referendum to be held,

several processes set out in the Citizens Initiated Referenda Act 1993 must be followed and supporting signatures from over 10% of eligible voters nationwide must be obtained.

A government-initiated referendum is one promoted by the Government. It can be binding or indicative and can pose more than one question or questions with more than two possible answers

Democracy in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Most democratic nations have different levels or tiers of government.

In New Zealand we have both local and central government.

Every three years, we have elections to choose who we want to represent us, whether it's across the country or within our local area.

Here in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, our local government is Auckland Council.

Ways to participate in democracy

For a healthy democracy, it's important you take part and have your views heard. There are many different ways you can participate in democracy, both at local and national level.



How you can get involved in local democracy with Auckland Council



Vote during local government elections

Local government elections are held every three years and we encourage you to learn about the candidates and get out and vote!

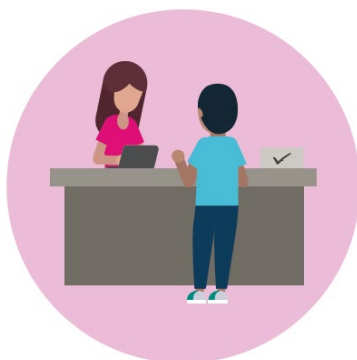
Your vote makes sure that the people who best represent your views and voice have a chance of being elected.

Become an elected member

As part of a democracy, any New Zealand citizen who is enrolled to vote can run for an elected member position.

You don't need any special qualifications to become a candidate. Elected members come from all backgrounds and walks of life.

A diversity of views and experience from elected members is another key part of a healthy democracy. Go to the [VoteAuckland website](#) to find out more about how, as an elected member, you can help shape the development of the Auckland region and build strong local communities.



Make a submission on public consultations

Before making major decisions, Auckland Council usually consults the community so their views can be considered by councillors and local boards.

We often consult on topics that affect the whole region, but consultations can also be led by local boards if it's a local matter.

We strongly encourage you give feedback during these consultations.

You can view all the topics which are open for consultation on the [Have Your Say website](#)

Have your say

Have Your Say website

Visit [AKL Have Your Say](#) to view all open consultations.

Consultations are also advertised on our website, social media pages, and sometimes in the wider media.

Select any consultation you are interested in to view the documents detailing the proposal.

Let us know how you feel about the proposal by sending us some feedback. You can either answer the multiple-choice questions in the feedback form online or write down your feedback and send it via email.

You should include things like:

- What do you agree with?
- What do you disagree with?
- What would you propose instead?
- Why would you propose this?

Join the People's Panel

The People's Panel is a great way of putting your hand up to take part in online surveys when we seek feedback from the public.

If you sign up for the People's Panel, you will receive one or two short surveys each month and you only need to complete the ones which interest you.

After you participate in a survey, you'll receive the results once consultation has closed. This is a great way of knowing more about how your community feels about topics that interest you. Of course, all your personal details will remain private throughout the process.

Help shape Auckland - [sign up to the People's Panel!](#)



Talk to your elected local representatives

If there's an issue that's not currently open for consultation, you can always talk to your elected local representatives.

Local boards are elected to make local decisions for each local board area.

They have local offices that are open to the public.

Bring local issues and concerns directly to your local board by:

- contacting the local board office
- contacting elected local board members
- presenting to a local board meeting.

Auckland's unique governance structure means that we have both our governing body and local boards. See [\[link\] our governance model](#) to learn more about what each of these is responsible for.

If you want to discuss Auckland-wide issues, contact a member of the Governing Body. Find their contacts on the Auckland Council website [here](#).

You should know

On the [Auckland Council website](#) you can find out :

- [who your local board is](#)
- [where the office is](#)
- [who the members are](#)
- [how to contact them.](#)

Start a petition

One way of engaging with your local elected representatives is through a petition.

A petition is a request for your elected representatives to investigate an issue that you are concerned about.

A petition can be made by one person, and it is usually on behalf of a group. Petitions made to council will be directed to the area of council that is responsible.

For example, if you and your neighbours felt that the trees on your street were always overgrown and needed more attention, you could submit a petition that was signed by you and your neighbours.

This petition would be asking council to investigate whether tree pruning in your local neighbourhood could happen more often.



Attend public meetings

At Auckland Council, all meetings and committees of the Governing Body and local boards are open to the public.

All decisions made by the Governing Body and local boards affect Aucklanders, so we all have a right to know how they are made.

This ensures 'transparent decision-making' which is another very important part of democracy.

How to attend a public meeting

Attend these meetings in person (depending on Covid-19 restrictions), or online if it is being held virtually.

See all [upcoming public meetings and agendas](#).

If a meeting is held online, then you can view the [live stream](#).

What to expect at a public meeting

Public meetings are held to discuss topics and issues and make decisions about them.

The topics that are being discussed at each meeting are put together in an 'agenda'.

The agenda is published two days before each meeting, so you can find out what will be discussed.

Speak at public meetings

As a member of the public, you can speak at any public meeting. Up to 30 minutes at the beginning of each meeting are dedicated to hearing from the public.

For Governing Body and committee meetings, you need to contact the Governance Advisor that is running the meeting at least a full working day before the meeting. Contact details for the Governance Advisor will be in the meeting agenda. Remember to include the subject matter that you are requesting to speak about. You will have up to five minutes to speak.

For local board meetings, you do not need any formal approval to speak. You will have up to three minutes to speak.

After you have spoken in your allocated time, you can listen to the elected members' discussion at the meeting, but you will not be able to participate.

Deputation

You can also choose to make a presentation at your local board meeting through a deputation.

A deputation is a formal presentation, requiring seven days' notice and the chairperson's approval.

Each speaker is allocated 10 minutes for a presentation.

You can talk about issues facing you or your community group or give updates about your group's activities.

A deputation is delivered in a public setting and is recorded on the official minutes.

Find out more about [how to speak at Governing Body and local board meetings](#).

Request official information

The Local Government Official Information and Requests Act (LGOIMA) was passed in 1987 to ensure that information is available to the public from local government agencies, like Auckland Council, when requested.

Think of it as a tool for transparency that helps streamline requests for information from Auckland Council.

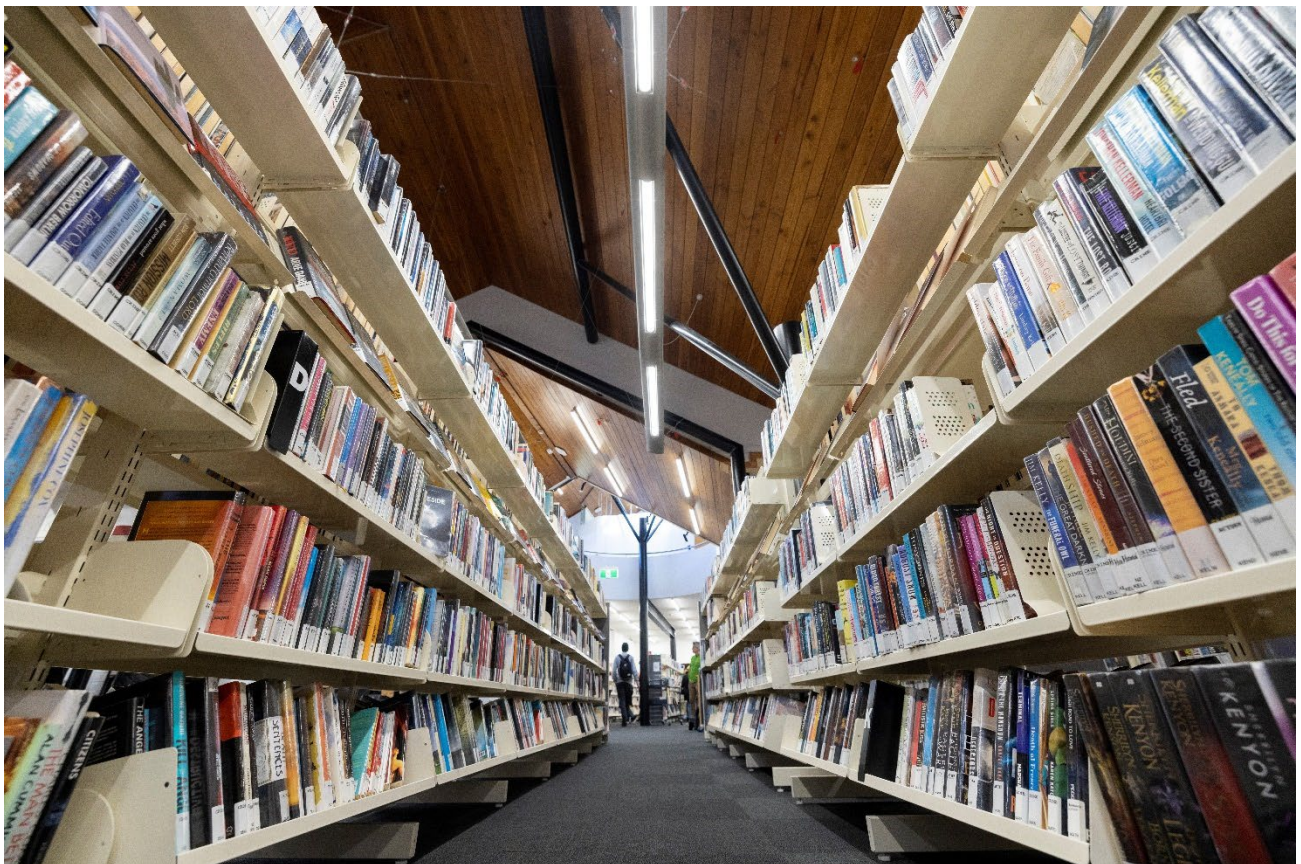
There is a lot of information that is readily available on the Auckland Council website, but sometimes we do not publish exactly what you are looking for.

Find out more about [requesting information from us](#).

Explore our archives


There is an [archive of previous meetings, agendas, and recordings.](#)

You can see what was discussed at these meetings, and what decisions were made.





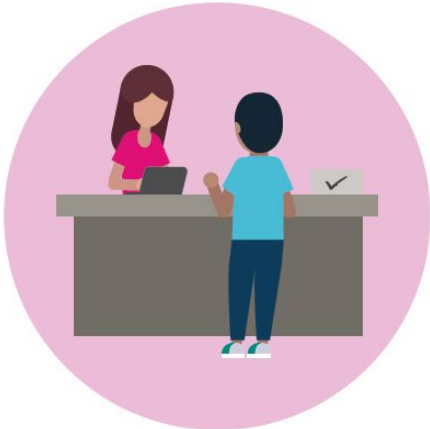
L3: What is civic participation

 This lesson requires access to the internet.

Teacher resource

For a healthy democracy, it's important you take part and have your views heard. There are many ways you can participate in democracy, at both the local and national level.

Civic participation is all about being actively involved in the democratic process by voting in elections and referenda, attending and speaking at public meetings, making submissions on public consultations, and holding your elected representatives to account.



Activity 1 – Defining democracy

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand the ways by which leadership of groups is acquired, exercised, and has consequences for communities and societies.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses).</p>
Learning Through Talk	<p>Year 8 Participates readily in classroom talk, using appropriate verbal and non-verbal language.</p>

Procedure:

- Before going through the content of this lesson, ask students to write down their own definitions of the words: ‘democracy’, ‘elections’ and ‘civic participation’ in the table provided in the student resource.
- Now get students to read the whole content section [‘Civic participation’](#), starting with the subsection [‘Democracy and you’](#).
- Ask students to review the definitions they wrote down beforehand and add revised definitions in the table provided in the student resource.

- Ask the students to share how their definitions changed, either with a partner, in a group or with the class.
- Finally, find a dictionary definition. Instruct students to add this definition in their table.

Democracy

“citizen” **Demos**

+

kratos “power”

Activity 2 – Write a submission to your local board

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating in order to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses).</p>

Procedure:

- Get students to read through the content of the section [‘Ways to participate in democracy’](#), specifically the section relating to local board submissions.
- Ask students to choose a topic that they are passionate about that affects their local area. Potential topics to write about include:
 - Dogs in public places/ beaches
 - Rubbish and recycling
 - Cycleways and walkways
 - Maintenance of local parks
 - Places for young people to hang out safely
 - Swimming pools or leisure centres

- Transport and road safety
- Students need to research the topic and decide what it is they would like to change or recommend.
 - Research options could include checking out [local board plans](#), media articles and videos.
- Students then write their submission to the local board. Some writing prompts are included in the student resource to help get them started:
 - Write a title
 - Introduce yourself and why this topic is important to you
 - Describe what you like / don't like about the current situation and what you'd like to change
 - End with a conclusion (a summary of why you are writing this)
- Please feel free to send any completed submissions through to your local board. [Find your local board contact details here](#)



Activity 3 – Have Your Say in a public consultation

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating in order to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses).</p>

Procedure:

- Visit [AKL Have Your Say](#) to find open consultations you can have your say in.
- Consultation topics can range from the region-wide Auckland annual budget to very localised proposals such as change to a playground or park.
- Once a topic is selected, get the students to review the documents summarising the proposal
- Get them to voice their opinion and debate: what do they agree with? What do they disagree with? Why? What would they propose instead?
- If you wish, you can get students to write their feedback formally and send it in response to the consultation.

Activity 4 – What are referenda?

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Sciences	<p>Level 3 Understand how groups make and implement rules and laws.</p> <p>Level 4 Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>Year 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decoding texts with such automaticity that they do not need to decode all words. Use their growing academic and content-specific vocabulary to understand texts. Create content that is concise and relevant to the curriculum task, often including carefully selected detail and/or comment that supports or elaborates on the main point. <p>Year 10 Include a complex range of ideas expressed concisely (e.g. in short answers).</p>
English Language Learning Progressions	<p>Reading - Stage 3 Texts use some lower frequency and technical words that are not easy to infer from the context.</p>
Learning Through Talk	<p>Year 8 Confident and competent in asking questions with familiar or unfamiliar people.</p>

Procedure:

- Firstly, read and discuss with the students the information about referenda (page 2) from the section 'Democracy and you'.
- Next, you can survey the class on one or more historical referendum questions.
- Once they have voted and counted the results, share the actual percentages from the referendums below.

Compulsory military training (1949)

3 August 1949	Are you in favour of compulsory military training?	Yes 77.9% No 22.1%
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Smacking as a parental correction (2009)

25 August 2009	Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?	Yes 11.98% No 87.4%
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Cannabis legalisation (2020)

17 October 2020	Do you support the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill?	Yes 48.4% No 50.7%
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- How do the actual results compare to the students’ votes? Get students to write a paragraph explaining the results of the class vote and giving possible reasons that the results are similar or different from the past.
- Writing frames are included below for students who require further support:
 - The majority of the class voted...
 - The class results are similar/different to the actual referendum.
 - A possible reason for the similarities/ differences is that...





L3: What is civic participation

Student resource



This lesson requires access to the internet.

For a healthy democracy, it's important you take part and have your views heard. There are many ways you can participate in democracy, at both the local and national level.

Civic participation is all about being actively involved in the democratic process by voting in elections and referenda, attending and speaking at public meetings, making submissions on public consultations, and holding your elected representatives to account.



Activity 1 – Defining democracy

In the table below, write your own definition of the words ‘democracy’, ‘elections’ and ‘civic participation’.

Concept	My definition
Democracy	----- ----- ----- -----
Elections	----- ----- ----- -----
Civic participation	----- ----- ----- -----

Democracy

“citizen” **Demos**

+

kratos “power”

Now that your teacher has taken you through the content, has your definition of the words changed? Write your revised definitions in the table and discuss how it changed with a partner, in a group or with the class.

Read the section '[Democracy and you](#)' for further information.

Concepts	My revised definitions
Democracy	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Elections	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Civic participation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Finally, find a dictionary definition of these concepts. Write the definition in the table:

Concepts	Dictionary definitions
Democracy	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Elections	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Civic participation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Activity 2 – Write a submission to your local board

This activity is about interacting with your local elected representatives by writing to your local board about an issue you care about for your community.



First, choose a topic that you are passionate about and that affects your local area. Topics could include:

- Dogs in public places/ beaches
- Rubbish and recycling
- Cycleways and walkways
- Maintenance of local parks
- Places for young people to hang out safely
- Swimming pools or leisure centres
- Transport and road safety

Once you have decided on a topic, do some research. You could find out what your local board is planning about it by checking out [local board plans](#), looking for news stories and opinions in the media. Have a think about what your own opinion is. Is there anything you would like to change?

Now you are ready to write your submission to the local board. Some writing prompts are included below to help get you started.

If you would like to send your completed submissions through to your local board, you can [find your local board contact details here](#).

Local board submission – recommended structure

- Write a title
- Introduce yourself and why this topic is important to you
- Describe what you like / don't like about the current situation and what you'd like to change
- End with a conclusion (a summary of why you are writing this and your suggestions)

Local board submission - template

Tēnā koe

My name is, I am a student
at..... and I am writing to you because

.....
.....

I notice in the most recent local board plan,

.....
.....

I would like to give my views on this important topic.

At present,

.....
.....

In addition,

.....
.....

This affects

.....
.....

A potential solution I see is

.....
.....

This would

.....
.....

Another idea is

.....
.....

To conclude, _____

Ngā mihi nui,

Activity 3 – Have Your Say in a public consultation

This activity is about learning how to have your say in a public consultation and help shaping our city.

Visit [AKL Have Your Say](#) with your class to find open consultations.

Consultation topics can range from the region-wide Auckland annual budget to very localised proposals such as change to a playground or park.

Select a consultation you want to have your say on with your class.

Review the documents summarising the proposal and discuss with your classmates:

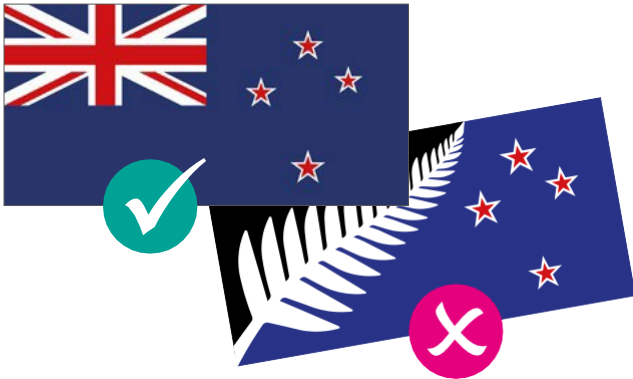
- what do you agree with?
- what do you disagree with?
- what would you propose instead?
- why?

With your teacher, decide if you wish to submit your class feedback on the consultation page. If you do, you will need to write the points you discussed above and send it to the email address listed on the consultation page. Make sure to include information about your school and class as the submitters.



Activity 4 – What are referenda?

Go through to the section on referenda from ‘Democracy and you’ to learn about what a referendum is and what different types of referenda exist.



Then, vote in one or more of the historical referenda included below.

Once you have made up your decision, compare your vote with your classmates’ and tally the results.

After your teacher has shared the results from the actual referendum, write a paragraph explaining how they compare with your class voting. Are the results similar or completely different? What reasons can you give for this?

Compulsory military training (1949)

In 1949, a referendum was held to see what the public’s view was on compulsory military training.

	I vote for compulsory military training	I vote against compulsory military training
Tally marks		
Percentage		

Smacking children (2009)

In 2009, a citizens-initiated referendum was held to find out views on smacking children.

Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?		
	YES	NO
Tally marks		
Percentage		

Cannabis legalisation (2020)

In 2020, a referendum was held alongside the general elections. In this referendum, you could vote on whether the recreational use of cannabis should become legal.

Do you support the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill?		
	YES	NO
Tally marks		
Percentage		

