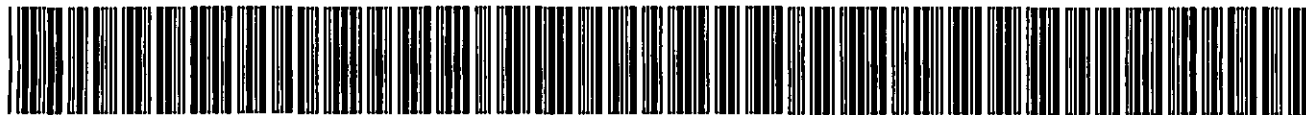


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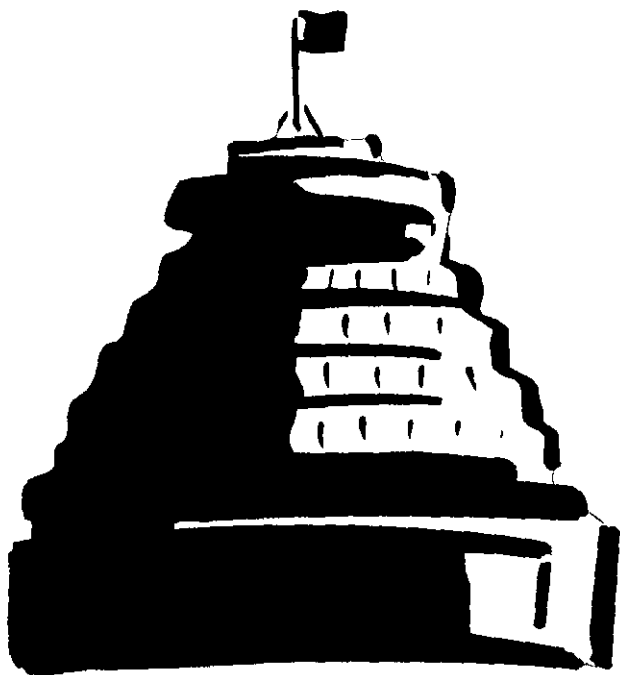


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Q&A

on

MMP



**MMP** (Mixed Member Proportional) is used to elect New Zealand's Parliament. It was used for the first time at the 1996 general election."

We begin this booklet with a summary of the basic facts about **MMP** that every voter needs to know in order to cast an effective vote. After examining each of the basic facts in more detail, we will answer some of the questions commonly asked about **MMP**.



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February, 1999

# The basic facts you need to know about **MMP**

## FACT 1

### You have two votes

- Your *Party Vote* is for the political party you most want to be represented in Parliament.
- Your *Electorate Vote* is for the candidate you want to be the MP for your electorate.

## FACT 2

### Parliament will usually have 120 MPs

- 61 MPs will represent 61 General Electorates. They are chosen by voters on the General Electoral Roll using their *Electorate Votes*.
- 6 MPs will represent 6 Maori Electorates. They are chosen by voters on the Maori Electoral Roll using their *Electorate Votes*.
- 53 MPs will be *list MPs*. They are elected to Parliament from lists of candidates nominated by political parties.

## FACT 3

### MMP is a *proportional* voting system

- In general, the total number of MPs in Parliament from each party depends on its share of all the *Party Votes*.
- However, a political party must win at least 5% of all the *Party Votes* **OR** win at least one electorate seat through the *Electorate Vote* to receive a proportional allocation of seats in Parliament.

# More details about the 3 basic facts

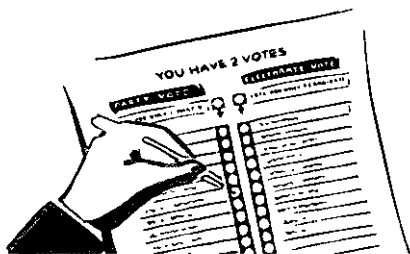
## FACT 1

### You will have *two votes*

You will be able to cast two votes at the next general election.

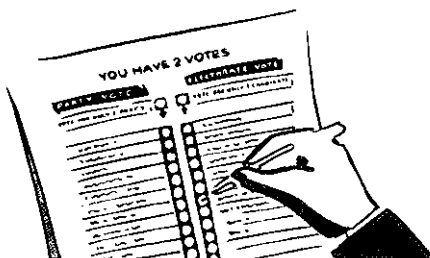
One vote is your *Party Vote*. This part of the ballot paper shows all the registered political parties that have nominated lists of candidates for the election.

To cast this vote, tick the circle after the name of the party you most want to be represented in Parliament, like this:



Your other vote is your *Electorate Vote*. This part of the ballot paper shows the names and parties of all the candidates nominated for election as the Member of Parliament to represent your electorate.

You vote by ticking the circle before the name of the candidate you prefer, like this:



See pages 8-9 for more information about voting.

**FACT 2**

**Parliament will usually have 120 MPs**

An MP can be elected to Parliament as an *electorate MP* or as a *list MP*.

Each of the 61 General electorates, and each of the 6 Maori electorates, elects its own *electorate MP*.

The candidate who wins the most *Electorate Votes* in an electorate becomes its *electorate MP*.

A *list MP* is elected to Parliament from a list of candidates nominated by a registered party before the general election. There are likely to be 53 *list MPs* elected at the next general election.

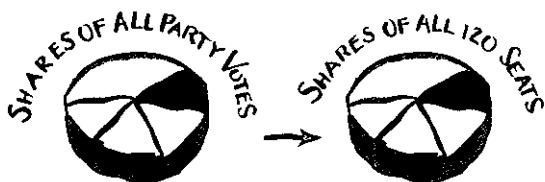
So the total of 120 MPs is made up like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} 61 \text{ GENERAL ELECTORATE MPs} \\ + 6 \text{ MAORI ELECTORATE MPs} \\ + 53 \text{ LIST MPs} \\ \hline 120 \text{ MPs IN TOTAL} \end{array}$$

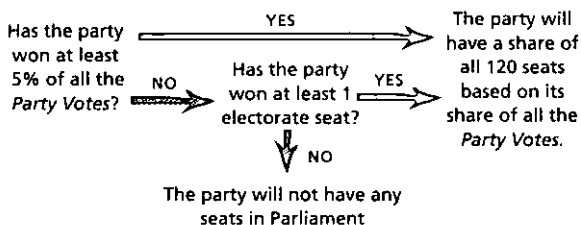
It is, however, possible for there to be more than 120 MPs, or fewer than 120 MPs, after a general election; see page 15.

**FACT 3****MMP is a proportional voting system**

This means that each party's share of all the *Party Votes* decides its share of all 120 seats in Parliament.



But in order to be eligible for a share of all the seats based on its share of all the *Party Votes*, a party must cross the threshold: it must win at least 5% of all the *Party Votes*, or it must win at least 1 electorate seat. This means that parties without significant support do not have any seats in Parliament.



If a party does cross the threshold, its total number of MPs is made up of any *electorate MPs* it has plus enough *list MPs* to reach its final share of all 120 MPs.

For example, a party that wins 30% of all the *Party Votes* will have 36 seats (30% of 120). If it won 15 electorate seats, it will have 21 list seats to bring it to its total of 36:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 15 \text{ ELECTORATE MPs} \\
 + 21 \text{ LIST MPs} \\
 \hline
 36 \text{ MPs}
 \end{array}
 \longrightarrow$$

The first 21 candidates on the party's list who haven't won an electorate seat will be elected to Parliament as list MPs for the party

If a party crosses the threshold but wins no electorate seats, all its MPs will be list MPs.

Here's a fictitious election result showing how MMP works:

	Party							TOTAL
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
% of all Party Votes	41	25	17	6	4	4	3	100
Total number of seats	53	32	22	8	5	0	0	120
Number of electorate MPs	34	22	9	0	2	0	0	67
Therefore number of list MPs	19	10	13	8	3	0	0	53

In this example, Party E, Party F, and Party G won fewer than 5% of all the *Party Votes*. But because Party E won an electorate seat, it crossed the threshold and so it was entitled to a share of all 120 seats based on its share of all the *Party Votes*. Party F and Party G did not cross the threshold, so they won't have any seats in Parliament.

Each party that crossed the threshold has a slightly higher percentage of all the seats than its percentage of all the *Party Votes*. That is because shares of seats are based on shares of *Party Votes* after excluding those cast for parties that do not cross the threshold (i.e. Party F and Party G). In this example, 7% of all *Party Votes* were cast for those two parties, and so seat allocations were based on 93% of all the *Party Votes*. Party A's share of seats has therefore increased to 44% ( $41 \div 93$ ), and the shares of seats of other parties that crossed the threshold have also increased.



# Answers to questions often asked about *MMP*

## QUESTION

**Do I have to cast both votes?**

## ANSWER

No. You can cast both votes, or only one.

## QUESTION

**If one of my votes is informal, will the other vote still count?**

## ANSWER

Yes, provided it is not informal as well.

## QUESTION

**What happens if I vote for an electorate for which I'm not enrolled?**

## ANSWER

Neither of your votes will count – even if you are enrolled for another electorate. That is why it is important that you know the address for which you are enrolled. You can check the latest electoral roll at your local Post Shop.

## QUESTION

**Can I vote for a candidate from one party with my *Electorate Vote* and for a different party with my *Party Vote*?**

## ANSWER

Yes. You can give your *Electorate Vote* to a candidate from the same party as your *Party Vote* by ticking circles alongside each other on the ballot paper. On the other hand, you can vote for a candidate from a different party or for an Independent candidate if there is one standing in your electorate by ticking circles on different lines of the ballot paper.

### QUESTION

Which vote is more important, the *Party Vote* or the *Electorate Vote*?

### ANSWER

Both votes are important, but for different reasons. The *Party Vote* is clearly important, because each registered party's share of all the *Party Votes* generally decides its share of all 120 seats in Parliament. The more seats a party has in Parliament, the more influence that party is likely to have in deciding what laws will be passed and how the country will be run.

But the *Electorate Vote* is also important. You can use it to say who you think would be the best person to represent your electorate in Parliament.

### QUESTION

Why do parties register?

### ANSWER

A party has to be registered with the Electoral Commission before it can nominate a party list and be on the ballot paper for the *Party Vote*. In order to be registered, a party must have at least 500 current financial members who are eligible to register as electors.

### QUESTION

Do all parties have to register?

### ANSWER

No. Candidates for unregistered parties and Independent candidates can stand for electorate seats, but they cannot stand for list seats.

**YOU HAVE 2 VOTES**

**PARTY VOTE**  
Vote for only one party

☒ CARROT  
☒ PEACH  
☒ SQUASH  
☒ BANANA  
☒ BROCCOLI PARTY  
☒ STRAWBERRY  
☒ PEAR  
☒ BROOKLYN  
☒ CRUISE

**ELECTORATE VOTE**  
Vote for only one candidate

☒ ALLIBERT, Fred  
☒ BARNADO, Mary  
☒ DUNBLOP, Albert  
☒ BOLINGTON, Anthony  
☒ GALEXY, John  
☒ BROCKMOR, Anna  
☒ BROCKMOR, Emma  
☒ HECTAR, Elizabeth  
☒ CHASSA, Sebastian  
☒ PAYLESS, Richard  
☒ QUEST, Oliver  
☒ BARNAL, Where

### QUESTION

**What is a party list?**

### ANSWER

A party list is a list of the names of the party's list candidates in the order that the party wants to see them elected to Parliament.

### QUESTION

**Who decides who will be a party's list candidates?**

### ANSWER

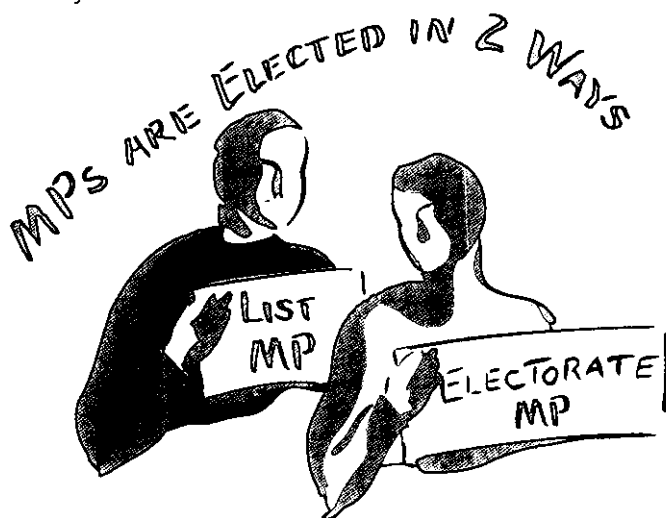
By law, each registered party must allow its members and/or their delegates to have a say in selecting its list and electorate candidates. If a registered party does that, it can choose its list and electorate candidates according to its own rules.

### QUESTION

**How will I know who is on each party's list?**

### ANSWER

Party lists will be included in information published in newspapers or sent to each household about a week before election day. They will also be available in the polling booth when you go to vote, and the parties are likely to advertise their lists.



**QUESTION**

**Can voters change the order of candidates on the party list?**

**ANSWER**

No. Each party decides the order of the candidates on its list.

**QUESTION**

**Can someone be a candidate in an electorate and also on a party list?**

**ANSWER**

Yes. If they win the electorate, their name is deleted from the party list and the following candidates on that party's list move up one place.

**QUESTION**

**What do *list MPs* do?**

**ANSWER**

*List MPs* have the same parliamentary responsibilities as *electorate MPs*. Many *list MPs* also do constituency work similar to *electorate MPs*. However that depends on how their parties view their role.

**QUESTION**

**How much can a party spend on its election campaign?**

**ANSWER**

A registered party's spending on election advertising in the 3 months before election day is limited to \$20,000 for each electorate in which it has nominated a candidate, plus \$1 million if the party is on the *Party Vote*. In addition to these limits on party spending, each electorate candidate can spend up to \$20,000 on advertising for their own personal campaign. Candidates and registered parties must provide returns after the election showing what they have spent. These returns are available for public inspection.

**QUESTION**

**Do parties and candidates have to disclose their donations?**

**ANSWER**

Each registered party must provide an annual return showing the name and address of anyone who has during the year donated a total of more than \$1,000 at electorate level or \$10,000 at national level. In addition, each electorate candidate must provide a return after the election showing the name and address of anyone who donated a total of more than \$1,000 for the candidate's campaign. These returns are open to public inspection.

**QUESTION**

**When will we know the final election results?**

**ANSWER**

Final results cannot be declared until 10 days after election day. This is because the election night count excludes all the special votes cast in New Zealand that are cast outside the electorate for which the voters are enrolled, and all the special votes cast overseas. These special votes must be delivered to the appropriate Returning Officer within 10 days of election day. Final counts are then done and the results declared.

**QUESTION**

**What happens to *Party Votes* cast for parties that do not cross the threshold?**

**ANSWER**

These *Party Votes* are disregarded when it comes to the allocation of seats. As a consequence those parties that cross the threshold may receive a slightly higher percentage of all the seats in Parliament compared to their shares of all the *Party Votes*. See the table on page 7 for an example.

**QUESTION**

**Who is the government between election day and the declaration of the final results?**

**ANSWER**

The government in power when the election is called continues to stay in office until a new government is sworn in. A government that has been defeated is called a "caretaker government" during the period between election day and when the new government takes office. By convention, a caretaker government does not make any major decisions unless they are absolutely necessary. Its main task is to continue the day to day business of government. If a major decision does have to be made, the incoming Prime Minister or the leaders of other parties would normally be consulted.

**QUESTION**

**Who decides who will be Prime Minister after the election?**

**ANSWER**

The Governor-General has the formal power to appoint the Prime Minister, but that power must always be exercised in a way that is politically neutral and in accordance with democratic principles. Ultimately, MPs voting in Parliament will have the final say, because the government has to have the support of the majority of MPs who vote on a vote of confidence.

**QUESTION**

**What is a vote of confidence?**

**ANSWER**

In order to stay in office, any government must be able to win certain crucial votes in Parliament, called "votes of confidence". The government may lose other votes in Parliament, but it stays in office as long as it does not lose a vote of confidence. Votes in Parliament on raising or spending money (e.g. the government's

annual Budget) are always matters of confidence in the government. Secondly, the government itself can move a vote of confidence or declare a vote in Parliament on an issue to be a matter of confidence in the government. That lets all MPs know that the government will resign if it loses the vote. Finally, there are some debates in Parliament when an opposition party can move a motion expressing lack of confidence in the government.

#### QUESTION

**What happens if a government loses a vote of confidence in Parliament?**

#### ANSWER

The government has to resign. The Governor-General then has to decide whether the leader of a party should be asked to form a new government that has the confidence of Parliament, or whether a general election should be held.

#### QUESTION

**If no single party wins more than half the seats in Parliament at a general election, who becomes the government?**

#### ANSWER

New Zealand would then have either a *majority coalition government* or a *minority government*.

In a *majority coalition government*, several parties or Independent MPs which together have more than half of all MPs agree to cooperate to form a government. If that happens, there will be ministers from more than one party in Cabinet.

In a *minority government*, a government is formed from one or more parties that do not have a majority of MPs. A minority government needs the support of other parties or Independent MPs that are not part of the government in order to win votes of confidence.

**QUESTION**

**Could there be more than 120 MPs in Parliament after a general election?**

**ANSWER**

Yes. It is possible for a party to win more electorate seats than the total number of seats it should receive on the basis of its share of all the *Party Votes*. If that happens, the party keeps the extra seats (called "overhang" seats) and the total number of seats in Parliament is increased by that number, but only until the next general election. For example, suppose a party wins 10% of all the party votes and is entitled to a total of 12 seats in Parliament. If it won 14 electorate seats, it keeps the 2 overhang seats and Parliament will have 122 seats until the next general election. Seats won by other parties are not affected.

**QUESTION**

**Could there be fewer than 120 MPs in Parliament after a general election?**

**ANSWER**

Yes. It is possible that a party might not nominate enough list candidates to fill all the seats it was entitled to have on the basis of its share of all the *Party Votes*. It would then not be able to fill those seats, which would remain vacant until the next general election. If that happened, Parliament would have fewer than 120 seats until the next general election. Seats won by other parties would not be affected.





**QUESTION**

**Are there by-elections under *MMP*?**

**ANSWER**

Yes, but only for electorate seats. If an MP who represents an electorate dies or resigns from Parliament, a by-election is held. If a *list MP* dies or resigns from Parliament, however, the next candidate from the original party list from which that MP was elected who is still a member of that party and is willing to become an MP is appointed to Parliament in their place until the next general election.

**QUESTION**

**Are *electorate MPs* and *list MPs* able to change parties while staying in Parliament?**

**ANSWER**

Yes. There is no legal barrier to an *electorate MP* or a *list MP* resigning from one party and either joining another party, or forming a new party, or becoming an Independent while still remaining an MP.

**QUESTION**

**How are fractions rounded when seats are allocated?**

**ANSWER**

Although percentages are a convenient way of explaining *MMP*, in fact the Chief Electoral Officer allocates seats proportionally using the "Sainte-Laguë" formula which avoids the need to round up or down. Briefly, the Chief Electoral Officer divides the number of *Party Votes* won by each party that crosses the threshold by the series of odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and so on, until the highest 120 quotients are obtained. The number of quotients each party has in the highest 120 quotients is the total number of seats to which that party is entitled. Each party then receives enough list seats to add to its electorate seats to reach its total number of seats.

**QUESTION**

**What happens if an Independent candidate wins an electorate seat?**

**ANSWER**

The total number of electorate seats won by Independent candidates and by candidates for parties that are not on the *Party Vote* are deducted from 120 before seats are allocated according to parties' shares of all the *Party Votes*. So if an Independent candidate won an electorate seat, 119 seats would be available for proportional allocation.

**QUESTION**

**Who draws electorate boundaries?**

**ANSWER**

An independent body called the Representation Commission draws the boundaries of General and Maori electorates following the Maori electoral option that is held after each 5-yearly population census. In drawing boundaries, the Representation Commission has to consider existing electorate boundaries, community of interest, communication links, topographical features and projected population changes. It must also ensure that the total population in each electorate (adults and children) is within 5% of the quota for that type of electorate.

**QUESTION**

**What is the Maori electoral option?**

**ANSWER**

It is the name of the period after each 5-yearly population census when each person on the Maori roll, and each person on the General roll who said they were of Maori descent when they last enrolled, is able to choose whether to be enrolled on the Maori roll or on the General roll. The number of Maori electorates is based on the results of the Maori electoral option and on the number of people (adults and children) who said they

were of Maori descent at the previous census. The next Maori electoral option is due to be held in 2001. The Representation Commission will then meet to draw the boundaries of the General and Maori electorates.

**QUESTION**

**Do other countries use *MMP*?**

**ANSWER**

Many countries elect their parliaments using proportional voting systems of one type or another. ***MMP*** is one type of proportional system used in some countries. Germany has used ***MMP*** since 1949.

**QUESTION**

**When will *MMP* be reviewed?**

**ANSWER**

The Electoral Act 1993 requires a parliamentary select committee to begin reviewing the ***MMP*** system in the year 2000 and to report to Parliament by mid-2002. The committee must also consider whether there should be a further referendum on changes to the electoral system.

**QUESTION**

**How do I enrol so I can vote?**

**ANSWER**

You can get on the roll for your electorate by filling in a form called *Application for registration as a Parliamentary elector*. This is available at any Post Shop or Postal Agency or from your local Registrar of Electors (contact details are in the White Pages of your telephone directory under New Zealand Post Limited).

**QUESTION**

**What do I do if I change address?**

**ANSWER**

After you have been at your new address for a month you need to fill in a "Change of Address Request" form or a new enrolment form. Both are available from any Post Shop, or by calling **0800 Enrol Now (0800 367 656)**.

**QUESTION****How will I know where to go to vote?****ANSWER**

The locations of polling places in each electorate will be advertised before election day. Voters will be able to get further information about polling facilities by phoning 0800 800 610.

**QUESTION****How can I vote if I can't get to a polling booth in my electorate on election day?****ANSWER**

There are several ways:

- you can arrange to vote before election day by contacting the returning officer or phoning 0800 800 610;
- you can go to any polling booth on election day and ask for a special vote;
- if you're in a hospital, maternity or rest home, you'll be given the opportunity to vote there;
- if you're overseas, contact the Chief Electoral Office (tel. +64 4 495 0030, fax. +64 4 495 0031) or the nearest New Zealand embassy.

**QUESTION****What is the Electoral Commission?****ANSWER**

The Electoral Commission is an independent body established by law. Its main functions are to inform the public about electoral matters, to register political parties, to receive parties' returns of election expenses and donations, and to allocate election broadcasting time and money to political parties.

**QUESTION****Where can I get more information?****ANSWER**

Contact the Electoral Commission on phone (4) 474 0670 or fax (4) 474 0674 or e-mail [info@elections.govt.nz](mailto:info@elections.govt.nz). You can also view the electoral website on the Internet at [www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)