

TASMAN DISTRICT VOTING SYSTEM PETITION

358 words

TASMAN VOTERS CAN HAVE THEIR SAY!

For the first time in 15 years Tasman District voters have an opportunity to say how their representatives are elected. They are signing a petition asking for a poll so the voters can decide whether the current system (FPP--First Past the Post) or the more representative STV (Single Transferable vote) is used in future elections.

Petition organiser Liz Thomas explains that STV (used for Health Board elections) is a form of proportional representation, with voters ranking their preferences, rather than ticking one box. "STV reduces wasted votes, with second choice votes being transferred, until the winners reach a true majority."

Confusion over voting would also be reduced if Tasman and health board voting systems were the same. "In 2016 there were nearly 1500 invalid votes," says Liz "because there were 2 voting systems and people didn't use the correct way of indicating who their votes were for."

Tasman councillors had four options last September when they had to decide on the system for the next two local body elections (2019 and 2022). "Unfortunately they chose the most conservative one, the status quo," says petition helper Penny Griffith.

Two of the options required the council to poll the electors for their preference before a decision was made. "After 15 years, we think it's time for the electors to have a say," says Griffith. "So we're taking on the responsibility of making that happen. It's a great democratic opportunity for Tasman, and we hope voters will take advantage of it." Tasman District Council has agreed that the petition for a poll can be located in all the district libraries: Takaka, Motueka, Richmond and Murchison. People can also contact Liz Thomas direct on lizthomaspost@gmail.com to get petition sheets.

The Local Electoral Act provides the mechanism for the petition and poll process, but timing is very tight. Petition helper Victoria Davis encourages people to go to their local library to sign the petition by mid-February, "Please get out there and sign the petition if you're on the Tasman electoral roll," she says. "It's time for us to have a say, so that our voting system becomes more representative and more democratic."

Contact details (including for further information)

Liz Thomas (Organiser): (03) 525 7035; (021) 106 4201; lizthomaspost@gmail.com

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