

So who gets to become the Government?

If a party wins more than half the seats in Parliament, it can form a majority government by itself.

If no one party has a majority, two or more parties, which together have more than half the seats in Parliament, can agree to form a majority coalition government. If this happens, there may be ministers in Cabinet from more than one party. Cabinet ministers have special responsibilities for running government departments, such as Treasury, the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Youth Development. They have the main say about what the government does. They meet together every Monday in secret. The Prime Minister is the head of the Cabinet.

Another way of forming a government is to have a minority government. That happens when one or more parties with less than half the seats in Parliament rely on the support of other parties outside the Government in order to stay in power. These are sometimes known as 'Confidence and Supply' agreements.

The Prime Minister is usually the leader of the party with the most seats in Parliament, so he or she has to be supported by the majority of MPs.

After the election, the Governor-General formally appoints the Prime Minister to organise and lead the Government.

Who is our Head of State?

When New Zealand was a British colony, it borrowed its model of cabinet government from Britain. That's why we have a Governor-General who represents the Queen - Elizabeth II is Queen of New Zealand. She's our head of state but she happens also to be Queen of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries, and resides in the United Kingdom. She appoints a Governor-General as her representative. The Governor-General summons Parliament, appoints Cabinet Ministers, and approves any bill passed by Parliament before it becomes law. He or she follows the advice of the Government and does not get involved in party politics.

The first Māori Governor-General was Sir Paul Reeves, appointed in 1985. He was followed by Dame Catherine Tizard, the first woman to be appointed. The current Governor-General is Lieutenant-General Sir Jeremiah (Jerry) Mateparae.

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www.elections.org.nz

This is the Electoral Commission's website.

www.parliament.nz

This is Parliament's website.

www.beehive.govt.nz

This is all about cabinet and the decisions it makes.

www.gov-gen.govt.nz

This is the Governor-General's website.

www.govt.nz

This is the official gateway to government organisations.

www.dpmc.govt.nz

This is the website of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

www.legislation.govt.nz

This will give you free access to New Zealand Acts, Bills and Regulations of Parliament.

Concept list

majority government

minority government

majority coalition government

parties

Cabinet

Prime Minister

Cabinet Ministers

support

seats

ministers

responsibilities