



*communities where whānau are housed, connected,  
valued and thriving*

## Election Week at DCM

### Ensuring the most marginalised have a voice at the General Election



*The Electoral Commission team at DCM: Ailish, Te Rangī, Hayden, Allan and Sharon.*

In the lead-up to Election Day 2023, DCM had a polling booth at 2 Lukes Lane to ensure people who are experiencing homelessness could vote and have their voices heard at the General Election.

Our desire to have a polling booth at DCM came about after we heard about one of our whānau – with literacy and other significant challenges – walking away from a polling booth in frustration after finding the process too difficult.

We knew that we could never let that happen again. And so, after months of preparation alongside the Electoral Commission, [101 whānau voted at DCM in October 2020](#), many for the very first time in their lives.

Many of these whānau were Māori, like Peter, our first voter in 2020, while some, like Trevor, are no longer with us. Trevor told us that he had never voted before due to various stretches in prison. We were thrilled that he was able to vote at least once in his lifetime.

Needless to say, there was never a doubt in our mind that DCM had to be a polling booth again!



*Peter (left), our first voter in 2020, celebrates after exiting the polling booth; Trevor (right) was among a number of first-time-voting whānau in 2020.*

As the 2023 election approached, we started the process of checking people’s enrolment details, quickly finding that many had fallen off the electoral roll due to a change of address or having no fixed abode. We were able to take whānau through the enrolment process by sitting alongside them – often using DCM as their address – ensuring that filling out forms and providing personal details wasn’t a barrier.

We also facilitated discussions in Te Hāpai and were delighted to have a familiar face from 2020, Erin Marsh, Senior Advisor for Community Engagement with the Electoral Commission, join us for a ‘practice voting’ session.



*Meda enrolls for the election with assistance from Erin.*

Erin says, “Getting to come in and talk with the whānau before voting started was something I feel was an important part of the process in making sure that everyone felt comfortable, safe and well supported when it came time to actually vote. We got some great questions about what to expect, how to mark the voting paper and what to do if you needed to cast a special vote. As always, the staff at DCM were welcoming and made us feel very much at home.”

Ensuring the most marginalised have a voice at the General Election (Ngā Kōrero, 10 Oct 2023)  
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Another familiar face joining us this year was Te Rangi Waaka – our Voting Place Manager. “There’s been a lot of excitement and a lot of fun yarns and a few jokes here and there,” says Te Rangi. “They keep asking about lollies, so Sharon ended up getting some, and everyone’s been taking one!

“It’s lovely to do the opening karakia and waiata. Then you can meet everybody, and they know you when they come in the door. It’s nice to be here at DCM – it’s great to facilitate and help what you guys do.”



*DCM's Manahautū (Director) Stephen Turnock with Te Rangi getting ready for another day of voting.*

Thanks to all of these efforts, voting has been accessible for many at DCM. This included a number of profoundly deaf whānau who were able to vote with assistance from our team.

Ailish knows basic sign language and has been completing her social work degree while on placement at DCM. She popped on the Electoral Commission's orange vest to work as a Voter Assistant this year to ensure our people had another familiar face when it came time to cast their vote.



*Ailish assists Jeff, one of our deaf community, to vote.*

“It’s so important to get our people to vote,” says Ailish. “If it wasn’t set up here, they probably wouldn’t have voted. We’ve had a few people who have lived through many elections but this is their first time voting. Others are very passionate and well informed about what’s going on and who they are going to vote for.”



*Numerous young first-time voters have walked through our door this year. This included Magic who would not have voted without DCM’s polling booth.*

It has been insightful talking to our people about what has inspired them to vote this year. Our first voter of the week, Mahir, simply said, “I’m voting because it’s the right thing to do.”

Others are concerned about what they perceive as imminent threats to beneficiaries. Patrick told us, “I’m voting for the underprivileged and for the party who will best regulate the drugs and help the homeless folk.” He added his concern about which party is best equipped to work with gangs instead of working against them. Larry told us he was voting for the party he thought best supports New Zealand’s sustainability.

And Robert came out of the polling booth, commenting, “That was great! It made me feel like I was a part of something.”



*Sia encourages some of our wahine to vote.*



Being a part of something is our vision for our whānau. We want them to be counted, have their voices heard, and vote.

“Democracy only works if voices from every part of society are heard,” says Erin. “And it’s especially important that our marginalised communities get to vote as their voices go unheard in so many other areas.”

DCM’s Director Stephen adds, “I think that it’s really important that people utilise opportunities regardless of your situation or your environment, to have your voice heard. Everyone’s voice is important. Everyone should be supported to exercise their democratic right in terms of choosing who it is that they want to represent them and make decisions for them in their lives.”

“A lot of people are disenfranchised by our system,” says Ailish. “Many of our whānau don’t understand that politics can have an impact on them. But when you explain that it’s the politicians who are in charge of the justice system, the tax system, WINZ – which is a lot of their lives – then that starts to change things.

“I just wish that the world could be a bit fairer and that everyone could have access to quality housing – because that is not always the case when you have a roof over your head. Sometimes it’s not a sustainable place, it’s not a place where you can thrive, it’s not always a safe place. I feel like a lot of people just want to pretend that homeless people don’t exist. I would like to see them be included in society, and that is what we’re achieving here.”



**WORDS/IMAGES: MATTHEW MAWKES.**



**Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.**

With your basket and my basket, the people will thrive.

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