

WHAKATAU 2026:

WHAKAATA MĀORI TO TAKE LIVE ELECTION DEBATES ACROSS THE MOTU

Ko te aho o te reo, ko te whenu pōti, hei tāniko anamata!

Every Voice. Every Vote. Shaping Our Future

Whakaata Māori will take its General Election coverage into hāpori across the motu, with live debates across seven Māori electorates, independent polling and electorate-specific research, dedicated rangatahi content and comprehensive election-night coverage.

Under the banner Whakatau 2026, Whakaata Māori will create a trusted kaupapa Māori space where whānau can hear directly from candidates, examine the choices before them and make informed decisions about their future.

Whakaata Māori Kaiurungi Pāpāho | Director of Content and Audience Engagement Maria Barlow says Whakatau 2026 reflects the organisation's responsibility to ensure Māori voices, priorities and aspirations remain at the centre of the national political conversation.

“Whakatau 2026 is about ensuring whānau can hear directly from those seeking to represent them, understand where they stand and make informed decisions about the future,” says Maria Barlow.

“By taking our debates into the Māori electorates, we are bringing the political conversation closer to the communities whose lives will be shaped by the decisions made after this election.

“We also want rangatahi to see themselves in our coverage and recognise the influence they can have. Their voices, experiences and aspirations matter, and they have the power to shape what comes next.”

Whakatau 2026 brings together some of Aotearoa's leading Māori political journalists, broadcasters and commentators, including *Te Ao with Moana* host Moana Maniapoto, senior political journalists Māni Dunlop and Whatitiri Te Wake, award-winning political journalist Maiki Sherman and renowned broadcaster Julian Wilcox.

Returning to her broadcasting roots at Whakaata Māori, Maiki Sherman will contribute across the wider Whakatau 2026 coverage, drawing on her extensive political journalism experience. Maiki Sherman and Julian Wilcox will also co-moderate the live Māori electorate debates.

Each debate will be informed by independent quantitative polling and electorate-specific research. This evidence-led approach will help ensure candidates are asked to account for how they will respond to the aspirations, priorities and challenges identified by the communities they seek to represent.

Rangatahi Māori are another key focus of Whakatau 2026. The Electoral Commission estimates that approximately 200,000 New Zealanders aged 18–24 are not currently enrolled to vote, highlighting the importance of creating political coverage that connects with young people in relevant and engaging ways.

The social-first series *Straight Up!* will bring seven emerging political leaders into direct conversations about the choices facing rangatahi Māori. Hosted by comedian Janaye Henry, the series will use real-life scenarios, unexpected challenges and rapid decision-making exercises to reveal the values, priorities and leadership approaches of those seeking to help shape the future of Aotearoa.

Te Ao Māori News will support the wider Whakatau 2026 offering with daily reporting, breaking news and stories from across the motu, ensuring Māori perspectives remain at the centre of election coverage throughout the campaign.

WHAKATAU 2026 PROGRAMME LINE-UP

He Aha Te Whakatau

Māni Dunlop and Whatitiri Te Wake host a live fortnightly programme unpacking the political and election stories making headlines across Māori media. Produced by Rukuwai Tipene-Allen, the series provides greater insight, context and depth into the decisions and developments shaping Aotearoa.

Watch now: Te Ao Māori News, MĀORI+ and Whakaata Māori.

Pre-Election Special

A retrospective examining the Government's term, its major decisions and their effects on Māori communities and Aotearoa.

Watch 22 September: Whakaata Māori, MĀORI+ and Te Ao Māori News.

Straight Up!

Janaye Henry brings seven emerging political leaders into a series of engaging conversations and challenges grounded in the lived realities of rangatahi. Through real-life scenarios, unexpected challenges and rapid decision-making exercises, the series explores the values, priorities and leadership approaches that could shape the future of Aotearoa politics.

From 14 September: Te Ao Māori News, MĀORI+, Instagram and Facebook.

Whakatau 2026 Māori Electorate Debates

In collaboration with *The Hui*, Whakaata Māori will broadcast live from regional venues across all seven Māori electorates. Co-moderated by Julian Wilcox and Maiki Sherman, each debate will be informed by independent polling and electorate-specific research and will focus on the priorities of the communities the candidates are seeking to represent.

Live from 29 September: Whakaata Māori, MĀORI+, Te Ao Māori News and social media.

MĀORI+ presents the Young Leaders' Debate

Rangatahi Māori bring their aspirations, lived realities and expectations into the centre of the political conversation. The debate will focus on the issues and decisions that matter to young Māori voters and provide an opportunity to hear how a new generation of political leaders would respond.

Watch 27 October at 7.00pm: MĀORI+, TikTok and other digital platforms.

Māori Leaders' Debate with Te Ao with Moana

Party leaders and Māori candidates standing in general electorates discuss Māori aspirations and priorities within the wider national political landscape. The debate will be followed by a live *He Aha Te Whakatau* analysis special.

Watch 28 October at 7.00pm: Whakaata Māori, MĀORI+, Te Ao Māori News and social media.

Whakatau 2026 Election Night Special

The Whakatau 2026 political team will provide comprehensive live coverage as the election results unfold, supported by reporters stationed across the motu. The special will feature real-time results, candidate reactions, informed commentary and analysis of what the emerging outcome could mean for whānau, hapū, iwi and Aotearoa.

Live from 7.00pm on Saturday 7 November: Whakaata Māori, MĀORI+, Te Ao Māori News and social media.

Whakatau 2026 Post-Election Special

Highlights from election night, interviews with successful candidates and expert analysis examining what the result means for Māori communities and the future direction of Aotearoa.

Watch at 5.00pm on Sunday 8 November: Whakaata Māori, MĀORI+, Te Ao Māori News and social media.

ENDS

ENDS

About MĀORI+: MĀORI+ is the digital gateway to te ao Māori – a free streaming app that brings together the best in Māori storytelling, language, news, haka and entertainment. Designed with whānau in mind, the platform is easy to navigate, available across devices, and constantly updated with fresh content. Download the app from [Google Play](#) or the [Apple store](#). Watch online at www.maoriplus.co.nz

About Whakaata Māori: Whakaata Māori is Aotearoa New Zealand's national indigenous media organisation, dedicated to revitalising and empowering te reo Māori, culture, and identity through storytelling. Guided by the vision, kia mauriora te reo - a future where te reo Māori is spoken everywhere, every day - Whakaata Māori fosters an environment where the language and its cultural heritage can thrive.

Established in 2004, Whakaata Māori has delivered some of Aotearoa New Zealand's most cherished content, connecting audiences with stories that celebrate and uplift te reo Māori and Māori culture.

Māori Television trades under its reo Māori name to better reflect the role it plays in revitalising te reo Māori, our culture, and sharing our stories across multiple platforms. Whakaata means 'to mirror', 'to reflect' or 'to display.'

<https://whakaatamaori.co.nz>