



# Feedback Form

Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ruapehu  
Ruapehu District Council  
**Draft Long Term Plan 2024/2034**



## Changes to our Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy

Proposal to offer increased rates remission support to the owners of Māori land

Council is proposing to make changes to our Māori Freehold Land Rates Remission Policy which will become known as the Remission of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy.

The proposed changes to the policy will ensure it is up to date and compliant with the legislation for rating of Māori Freehold Land and the principles of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 and offer wider support to owners of Māori land to look after their whenua for current and future generations.

Māori freehold land is land where Māori customary interests have been converted to freehold title by the Māori Land Court or its predecessors by a freehold order. This land has therefore never been out of Māori ownership. Council is proposing to consider applications for remissions on certain types of Māori land that is not in Māori freehold title.

We are reviewing our policy following changes to the Local Government Act 2002 and Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 that took effect in July 2021, which included significant changes to the rating of Māori Freehold Land.

While this policy particularly affects Māori landowners in Ruapehu, everyone in our community may have an interest and is invited to provide a submission on the proposed changes to the policy.

As part of the review of this policy, we have considered the option of retaining the existing policy and have decided instead to consult on the proposed changes as these better align with Council's strategic priorities of improving outcomes for Māori.

### What is the Remission of Rates on Māori Freehold Land Policy?

All councils are required to have a policy on rates remissions on Māori freehold land. This policy sets out the criteria under which we will consider applications for remissions on Māori freehold land in the region.

- A rates remission is when Council agrees to waive the obligation to pay certain rates on a property for a specified period.

### Wellbeing Framework alignment

The 2024/34 Long Term Plan is informed by Council's Wellbeing Framework which includes the values, purpose, vision, and environmental outcomes we are aiming for on behalf of our communities.

The proposal to increase rates remission support to the owners of Māori land supports the following Wellbeing Framework objectives:



#### Our values:

- Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship)
- Manaakitanga (Care for others)
- Whanaungatanga (upholding relationships)
- Rangatiratanga (Enabling others)



#### Our outcomes:

- Thriving communities



#### Our role as:

- Funder
- Regulator
- Partner

Following the changes to the Local Government (Rating) Act in July 2021, many of the Māori freehold land properties which previously would have been eligible for a rates remission are now treated as non-rateable as the land is unused.

This means that rates are not charged against the property in the first instance, so no remission needs to be applied for. Ruapehu is proposing to consider applications for remissions on Māori land that is not in Māori freehold title, in the following areas:

1. Land converted from Māori freehold title to general title by a status order change under the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967.
2. Land returned through Treaty settlements, where:
  - The land is not being used for residential purposes and/or generating a commercial return; and
  - The Crown or Council had not been paying rates on the land prior to its transfer to Māori ownership.
3. Land in general title owned collectively by Māori that meets the criteria of the policy.

This consultation document includes an overview of the proposed changes, why the changes are being proposed and some examples of what this might mean in practice. As well as this document we encourage you to read the full policy available on our website [ruapehudec.govt.nz](https://ruapehudec.govt.nz) before making a submission.

## **Māori Freehold Land**

The existing Ruapehu policy already provides for rates remissions on Māori freehold land in the region, and this is not suggested to change. What has changed is that a large number of Māori freehold properties that were eligible for a remission are now classified as non-rateable as they are considered unused land under the Local Government (Rating) Act.

If your land is rateable, take a look at the criteria for a rates remission under our policy and consider making an application if you think you may be eligible.

## **Remission Criteria**

We will give a remission of up to 100 percent of all rates due for eligible land for the years for which it is granted based on the extent to which the remission of rates will:

1. Support the use of the land by owners for traditional purposes.
2. Support the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands.
3. Avoid further alienation of Māori freehold land.
4. Facilitate any wish of the owners to develop the land for economic use intention.
5. Recognise and take account of the presence of wāhi tapu that may affect the use of the land for other purposes.

## **Land converted from Māori freehold to general title**

As a result of the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967, a large number of Māori freehold land blocks were compulsorily converted to general title. Many Māori landowners did not know this had happened to their land at the time, and some are not aware even today about the change in the status of their land.

These changes can have big impacts on how land is treated by councils for rating purposes though, as well as making it easier for land to be sold to non-Māori. Land in general title is not currently eligible for a rates remission under our existing policy.

## **What we are proposing to change**

Ruapehu is proposing that land which was converted from Māori freehold to general title in this way be treated the same as Māori freehold land under our policy.

## **Why are we proposing to do this?**

This will mean that Māori landowners of general land, if they can show that their land status was changed as a result of the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1967, will be eligible for a rates remission under the same criteria and conditions as Māori freehold land in our policy. The only requirement is that current owners must be a descendant of the landowners at the time of the status order change under the 1967 Act.

## **Land returned through Treaty settlements**

Almost all land returned through Treaty settlements is in general title and as a result, this land is not eligible for rates remissions under our current policy.

We are proposing to include land returned through Treaty settlements where:

1. The land is not being used for residential purposes and/or generating a commercial return; and
2. Rates were not previously payable on the land; and
3. The land meets the criteria set out in the policy.

### Why are we proposing to do this

Treaty settlements can include the return of land with conditions that make the land rateable where this may not have been the case while in Crown or Council ownership, land that is used for the benefit of iwi, hapū, whānau or the wider community, or return of land with commercial potential that is not immediately realised.

Council looks to support the aspirations of Māori post-settlement, and rates remissions on these properties is one way we can do so.

### Māori land under development

Changes to the Local Government (Rating) Act included the ability for owners of Māori freehold land to apply for a remission to cover the period in which the land is being developed, if it meets certain criteria. Our existing policy provided this remission option, and it is not proposed to change this.

### Administration changes

There is one change to the administration of this policy to highlight. This relates to:

1. The suppression of rating penalties for land that is covered by the policy and is in the ownership of trustees, which has insufficient income derived from the land to pay rates.

### Why are we proposing to do this

This proposal aligns with the practices of other councils. Applying a penalty suppression in these situations will remove the snowball effect that cumulative penalties can create, increasing the balance of rates due to an unrealistic amount. In many cases these penalties are written off anyway, therefore suppressing them makes both administrative and financial sense.

<b>Impact on rates</b>	The value of the rate shift will depend on the number and value of the remissions.
<b>Impact on debt</b>	None.
<b>Impact on Levels of Service</b>	None.



# The options:

## 1. Retain our current Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy. Only make required legislative changes.

Does not increase the rates remission support available to the owners of Māori land.

No increased shift in rate requirement to other ratepayers from increasing the value of the remission.

## 2. Make changes to our Māori Freehold Land Remission Policy.

The proposed changes to the policy will:

- Ensure it is up to date and compliant with the legislation for rating of Māori Freehold Land and the principles of Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993.
- Consider applications for remissions on certain types of Māori land that is not in Māori freehold title.
- Offer wider rate remission support to owners of Māori land to look after their whenua for current and future generations.
- All remissions shift the rate requirement to other ratepayers which would increase.
- Better aligns with Council's strategic priorities of improving outcomes for Māori and the objectives of our Wellbeing Framework.

What option do you prefer?

Option 1

Option 2 is our preferred option

Option 2

Tell us why or any other option you prefer:

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.....  
.....  
.....

Name:

.....

Organisation (if applicable):

.....

Postal address:

.....

Best daytime contact number:

.....

Email:

Keep me advised of future consultations

Would you like to support your feedback by speaking to Council during the Hearings?

Yes

No

If you ticked 'yes' we will contact you to arrange a speaking date and time.

The Hearings are scheduled for Tue 14<sup>th</sup> May (Ohakune and Raetihi) and Wed 15<sup>th</sup> May (Taumarunui). You can choose to speak at either or online.

A maximum of two speakers and ten (10) minutes of total speaking time per submission is permitted.

You can bring your feedback form into any Council office or submit via:



### Mail:

Freepost 492  
Ruapehu District Council  
Private Bag 1001  
Taumarunui 3946



### Email:

consultation@ruapehudc.govt.nz



### Please note - you can also provide feedback on-line:

Use our on-line submission form on our consultation website:  
[submissions.ruapehudc.govt.nz](https://submissions.ruapehudc.govt.nz) or use your phone and the QR code

