

NATIONAL

Hone Harawira wins Te Tai Tokerau by-election, slashes margin

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Hone Harawira's gamble in staking his political future on a by-election in Te Tai Tokerau has paid off after he kept the seat in a tight race tonight.

One hundred per cent of votes have now been counted and Harawira wins with a 867 vote majority over closest rival Labour MP Kelvin Davis.

But Harawira's 2008 majority of more than 6000 votes has been slashed.

The fate of Harawira's fledgling Mana Party hinged on today's by-election, which was forced by the former Maori Party MP quitting to seek a fresh mandate after parting ways with his former colleagues over the foreshore and seabed and other issues.

Harawira celebrated his win at Mahimaru Marae in Awanui, Northland.

Harawira's supporters were so certain he would win they started celebrating at 3pm this afternoon. By the time he arrived at 7.30pm they were cheering him on.

Harawira himself appeared satisfied and not at all nervous. He said it had been a great day before being whisked inside for a formal welcome.

Polls done in the weeks leading up to the by-election suggested it could be a close race with Labour's Kelvin Davis neck and neck with Harawira.

Davis said he had been hoping to win based on a recent poll that put him 1 per cent behind Harawira.

"Obviously I'm disappointed. It's not the result I was aiming for but congratulations to Hone."

However, the Labour Party was celebrating slashing the margin by 90 per cent compared to the 2008 general election he said.

Solomon Tipene, who ran at third place in polls leading up to the by-election, is with Maori Party co-leader Pita Sharp at the Hoana Waititi Marae in West Auckland.

The result is a blow for the Maori Party which took the Te Tai Tokerau seat and others in 2008 on the back of a tide of disaffection with Labour among Maori voters. But its coalition with National has forced divisions within the party.

The Mana Party will hold its first conference tomorrow and when Harawira returns to Parliament he will qualify for extra funding as a party leader after Mana's registration just squeaked through before the by-election.

Tonight's results are provisional. They are:

Hone Harawira, Mana Party 5611 votes

Kelvin Davis, Labour 4744 votes

Solomon Tipene, Maori Party 1026 votes

Kelwyn Alp, OUR 63 votes

Maki Herbert ALCP 126 votes