

Constitutional and Public Integrity Review Bill

A Bill to establish an independent Constitutional and Public Integrity Review of New Zealand's system of governance, democratic accountability, public integrity, public finance, and the rights of the people.

1. Title

This Act is the **Constitutional and Public Integrity Review Act 2026**.

2. Commencement

This Act comes into force on the day after the date on which it receives the Royal assent.

3. Purpose of this Act

The purpose of this Act is to establish an independent, transparent, public, and time-bound review into whether New Zealand's current system of governance remains fit for purpose.

The Review must examine whether the current system provides sufficient:

- a. democratic accountability;
 - b. transparency of decision-making;
 - c. public participation;
 - d. protection of human rights and civil liberties;
 - e. financial integrity and public finance accountability;
 - f. protection against corruption, conflicts of interest, and improper influence;
 - g. regional and community voice in decision-making;
 - h. constitutional safeguards against concentration of power; and
 - i. lawful pathways for the people of New Zealand to review and reform the system that governs them.
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4. Principles guiding this Act

All persons and bodies exercising powers under this Act must be guided by the following principles:

- a. the people of New Zealand are the source of democratic authority;
- b. public power must be exercised transparently, lawfully, and in the public interest;
- c. no government, Parliament, Cabinet, Minister, department, public entity, political party, or private interest should be beyond accountability;
- d. the system of government must protect the rights, freedoms, dignity, and equal citizenship of all people;
- e. Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be considered as part of New Zealand's constitutional foundation;
- f. public money must be traceable, auditable, and used for lawful public purposes;
- g. public institutions must be designed to prevent corruption, capture, secrecy, and misuse of authority;

- h. people must have meaningful ways to participate in decisions that affect their lives, communities, regions, and country; and
 - i. constitutional reform must be peaceful, lawful, democratic, and publicly understood.
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5. Interpretation

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

Cabinet means the senior decision-making body of Ministers within the executive government.

constitutional arrangements includes the laws, conventions, institutions, practices, and decision-making structures through which public power is exercised in New Zealand.

public integrity means the lawful, ethical, transparent, and accountable use of public power, public office, public money, and public trust.

Review means the Constitutional and Public Integrity Review established under this Act.

Review Commission means the independent body established under section 6.

systemic governance failure means a failure or weakness in the design, operation, accountability, transparency, or public responsiveness of the system of government, whether or not individual misconduct has been proven.

6. Establishment of the Constitutional and Public Integrity Review Commission

There is established an independent body called the **Constitutional and Public Integrity Review Commission**.

The Commission is independent of:

- a. the Government of the day;
- b. Cabinet;
- c. Ministers;
- d. political parties;
- e. departments and departmental chief executives;
- f. public entities; and
- g. any private, commercial, financial, or foreign interest.

The Commission must act independently, impartially, transparently, and in the public interest.

7. Membership of the Commission

The Commission must consist of not fewer than 9 and not more than 15 members.

The membership must collectively include expertise or lived experience in:

- a. constitutional law;
- b. public administration;
- c. public finance and audit;

- d. human rights;
- e. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tikanga Māori;
- f. local and regional governance;
- g. anti-corruption and public integrity systems;
- h. community development;
- i. youth and future generations;
- j. disability, accessibility, and social inclusion;
- k. economic sovereignty and public infrastructure; and
- l. democratic participation.

The Commissioners are appointed by the people and cannot be current or former Members of Parliament, Ministers, senior political party officials, departmental chief executives, or senior public servants.

8. Appointment process

The members of the Commission must be appointed through an open and transparent process.

The appointment process must include:

- a. public nomination;
- b. publication of selection criteria;
- c. disclosure of conflicts of interest;
- d. public release of a shortlist;
- e. an independent appointments panel; and
- f. confirmation by a supermajority vote of a Peoples representative council.

For the purposes of this section, a supermajority means not less than 75 percent of an interim Commission Committee.

9. Interim appointment panel

The interim appointment panel must consist of:

one elected representative from each region

one Maori representative (Kaumatū/Kūia status aged over 60) with no other tribal affiliations.

One Chair

No current Member of Parliament, Minister, political party office-holder, or lobbyist may serve on the interim appointment panel.

10. Matters the Review must examine

The Review must examine the operation, strengths, weaknesses, risks, and reform options relating to:

- a. Parliament and parliamentary accountability;
- b. Cabinet government and ministerial power;
- c. the role and influence of political parties;

- d. electoral law and democratic representation;
 - e. executive decision-making and emergency powers;
 - f. public service independence, accountability, and responsiveness;
 - g. public finance, debt, procurement, grants, contracts, and expenditure transparency;
 - h. audit powers and enforcement mechanisms;
 - i. serious fraud, corruption, conflicts of interest, lobbying, donations, and improper influence;
 - j. official information, ministerial diaries, record-keeping, meeting minutes, and public transparency;
 - k. human rights, civil liberties, and remedies for rights breaches;
 - l. the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in New Zealand's constitutional arrangements;
 - m. the role of the courts in constitutional protection;
 - n. local and regional governance;
 - o. the relationship between central government and communities;
 - p. protection of public assets and strategic infrastructure;
 - q. foreign influence, international agreements, and sovereignty safeguards;
 - r. public participation in national decision-making; and
 - s. whether New Zealand should consider a written constitution or other constitutional reform.
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11. Matters the Review may consider

The Review may consider reform options including, but not limited to:

- a. a written constitution;
 - b. stronger public integrity laws;
 - c. greater independence for audit, anti-corruption, and transparency bodies;
 - d. binding public referendums for major constitutional change;
 - e. stronger limits on emergency powers;
 - f. constitutional protection for human rights;
 - g. reform of Cabinet decision-making and ministerial accountability;
 - h. reform of political party funding, lobbying, and conflicts of interest;
 - i. decentralisation of public decision-making to regions and communities;
 - j. new regional governance structures;
 - k. stronger public finance dashboards and expenditure reporting;
 - l. constitutional protection of strategic public assets;
 - m. safeguards against public sector capture;
 - n. mechanisms for recall, removal, or review of public officials in cases of serious misconduct;
 - o. greater transparency over government contracts, procurement, grants, and subsidies; and
 - p. lawful transition pathways for any major system reform.
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12. Public participation

The Commission must ensure that the Review is accessible to the people of New Zealand.

The Commission must provide for:

- a. public submissions;
- b. regional hearings;
- c. community meetings;

- d. online participation;
- e. youth participation;
- f. Māori participation;
- g. disability-accessible participation;
- h. plain-English public materials;
- i. translated materials where appropriate;
- j. publication of evidence and summaries; and
- k. opportunities for people to respond to draft findings.

The Commission must not rely only on written submissions or formal hearings.

13. Protection from consultation fatigue

The Commission must design the Review to avoid unnecessary duplication, excessive consultation burden, and inaccessible processes.

The Commission must:

- a. clearly explain what people are being asked;
 - b. clearly explain how public input will be used;
 - c. publish regular progress updates;
 - d. identify areas where previous public consultation already provides useful evidence;
 - e. avoid repeating consultations without purpose; and
 - f. report back to participants on how their input influenced the Review.
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14. Powers of the Commission

The Commission may:

- a. request information from departments, agencies, public entities, Ministers, and former Ministers;
 - b. require public entities to provide relevant records, subject to lawful limits;
 - c. hold public or private hearings;
 - d. commission research;
 - e. receive evidence from experts and members of the public;
 - f. examine overseas constitutional and integrity models;
 - g. invite submissions from constitutional, financial, audit, human rights, public integrity, and governance experts; and
 - h. refer suspected serious wrongdoing to the appropriate authority.
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15. Duty of cooperation

Every department, public service agency, public entity, Crown entity, and office-holder must cooperate with the Commission.

Cooperation includes:

- a. providing information requested by the Commission;
 - b. identifying relevant records;
 - c. explaining decision-making processes;
 - d. assisting with public finance and governance data; and
 - e. giving reasons where information is withheld.
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16. Limits on the Commission

The Commission must not:

- a. determine criminal liability;
- b. replace the courts;
- c. remove elected representatives from office;
- d. suspend Parliament;
- e. override the Bill of Rights Act or other existing rights protections;
- f. interfere with active court proceedings; or
- g. make findings of personal wrongdoing without giving affected persons a fair opportunity to respond.

The Commission may, however, identify systemic risks, institutional failures, accountability gaps, and matters requiring further investigation.

17. Transparency obligations

The Commission must maintain a public website containing:

- a. its terms of reference;
 - b. meeting dates;
 - c. hearing dates;
 - d. submissions, unless confidentiality is justified;
 - e. commissioned reports;
 - f. expenditure by the Commission;
 - g. progress reports;
 - h. draft findings;
 - i. final recommendations; and
 - j. government and parliamentary responses.
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18. Interim report

The Commission must publish an interim report within 6 months of its establishment.

The interim report must identify:

- a. the main issues raised by the public;
- b. evidence received;
- c. areas of broad agreement;
- d. areas of disagreement;
- e. urgent public integrity concerns;

- f. gaps in current accountability mechanisms; and
 - g. matters requiring further investigation.
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19. Final report

The Commission must publish a final report within 12 months of its establishment.

The final report must include:

- a. findings on whether New Zealand's current governance system remains fit for purpose;
 - b. findings on public trust, accountability, transparency, and participation;
 - c. findings on public finance and integrity risks;
 - d. findings on constitutional safeguards and concentration of power;
 - e. recommended reforms;
 - f. draft legislative options where appropriate;
 - g. a proposed pathway for public decision-making on major constitutional change; and
 - h. recommendations on whether a referendum, constitutional convention, or further legislative process is required.
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20. Parliamentary debate

The final report must be presented to the House of Representatives within 10 sitting days of publication.

Public release will be on the same day that the House of Representatives receive it. Not early draft or alterations can be made by the sitting House.

The House of Representatives must hold a full debate on the final report within 30 sitting days of its presentation.

The debate must not be replaced by a general statement, procedural motion, or referral only.

21. Government response

The Government must publish a formal written response to the final report within 90 days of its presentation to the House of Representatives.

The Government response must state, for each recommendation, whether the Government:

- a. accepts the recommendation;
- b. accepts the recommendation in part;
- c. rejects the recommendation; or
- d. requires further work.

Where the Government rejects a recommendation, it must provide reasons.

22. Referendum pathway for major constitutional change

If the Commission recommends major constitutional change, including a written constitution, significant alteration to Parliament, Cabinet, electoral representation, public sovereignty, regional governance, or the structure of executive power, the Government must introduce a Referendum Pathway Bill within 2 months of the Government response.

The Referendum Pathway Bill must provide for:

- a. public education on the proposed change;
 - b. independent publication of arguments for and against;
 - c. accessible voting information;
 - d. neutral wording approved by an independent body; and
 - e. a national referendum.
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23. Constitutional Convention pathway

The Commission may recommend the establishment of a Constitutional Convention.

If a Constitutional Convention is recommended, the final report must include proposed rules for:

- a. membership;
 - b. public participation;
 - c. Māori participation;
 - d. regional representation;
 - e. youth and future generations representation;
 - f. expert advice;
 - g. transparency;
 - h. decision-making;
 - i. draft constitutional options; and
 - j. referral of final options to the people by referendum.
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24. Protection against political interference

No Minister, political party, department, public entity, lobbyist, donor, or private interest may direct or attempt to direct the Commission in relation to:

- a. what evidence it receives;
- b. what findings it makes;
- c. what recommendations it issues;
- d. what persons it hears from; or
- e. how it conducts its deliberations.

Any attempt to improperly influence the Commission must be publicly reported by the Commission.

25. Conflicts of interest

Every member, adviser, employee, and contractor of the Commission must disclose actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

The Commission must maintain a public register of conflicts of interest.

A person with a serious conflict of interest must not participate in decisions affected by that conflict.

26. Funding

Parliament must appropriate sufficient funding to allow the Commission to perform its functions independently and effectively.

The funding must be separately identified and publicly reported.

The Commission must publish bi-monthly expenditure statements.

27. Public education duty

The Commission must prepare plain-English public education material explaining:

- a. how New Zealand is currently governed;
- b. the role of Parliament;
- c. the role of Cabinet;
- d. the role of Ministers;
- e. the role of the public service;
- f. the role of the courts;
- g. the role of audit and integrity bodies;
- h. how public money is approved and spent;
- i. how people currently participate in decision-making; and
- j. what reform options are being considered.

The material must be politically neutral, accessible, and widely available.

28. Annual public integrity statement

Until the Review is completed and the Government has responded, the Government must publish an annual Public Integrity Statement.

The statement must report on:

- a. public trust indicators;
- b. official information performance;
- c. public finance transparency;
- d. ministerial diary transparency;
- e. conflicts of interest;
- f. lobbying and donations transparency;
- g. procurement and contracting risks;

- h. serious fraud and corruption risks; and
 - i. progress on public integrity reforms.
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29. Relationship with other laws

Nothing in this Act limits:

- a. the jurisdiction of the courts;
 - b. the independence of the judiciary;
 - c. the powers of the Controller and Auditor-General;
 - d. the powers of the Serious Fraud Office;
 - e. the powers of the Ombudsman;
 - f. the powers of the Human Rights Commission;
 - g. the rights protected under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990;
 - h. the Official Information Act 1982; or
 - i. any lawful investigation into misconduct, corruption, fraud, or misuse of public office.
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30. Expiry of this Act

This Act expires 3 years after the date on which it comes into force, unless continued by an Act of Parliament.

The expiry of this Act does not affect:

- a. the validity of the Commission's reports;
 - b. any recommendations made;
 - c. any legal duty to respond to the final report; or
 - d. any Referendum Pathway Bill introduced under this Act.
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Schedule 1

Required Terms of Reference for the Review

The Commission must inquire into and report on:

1. Whether New Zealand's current constitutional arrangements remain fit for purpose.
2. Whether the current political party system supports or weakens democratic accountability.
3. Whether Cabinet government concentrates too much power in too few hands.
4. Whether Parliament provides adequate scrutiny of executive government.
5. Whether public service advice, records, minutes, and decision-making are sufficiently transparent.
6. Whether Ministers and public officials are sufficiently accountable for major decisions.
7. Whether existing audit, investigation, and integrity bodies have enough authority.

8. Whether public finance, debt, borrowing, procurement, grants, and contracts are sufficiently transparent.
 9. Whether emergency powers are adequately limited and reviewed.
 10. Whether human rights and civil liberties are sufficiently protected.
 11. Whether current systems protect against corruption, conflicts of interest, lobbying influence, and political donations risk.
 12. Whether New Zealand has adequate safeguards against foreign influence over public policy, strategic assets, infrastructure, and public finance.
 13. Whether regional and community voices have enough influence over decisions that affect them.
 14. Whether the current system provides a meaningful pathway for the people to require constitutional review or reform.
 15. Whether New Zealand should consider a written constitution.
 16. Whether any proposed constitutional change should be put to the people by referendum.
 17. What lawful transition pathways would be required if major governance reform were recommended.
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Schedule 2

People's Mandate Declaration

We, the undersigned people of Aotearoa New Zealand, support the establishment of an independent Constitutional and Public Integrity Review.

We believe the people have the right to ask whether the system that governs them remains fit for purpose.

We call for a lawful, peaceful, democratic, transparent, and time-bound review of Parliament, Cabinet, political parties, public service accountability, public finance, emergency powers, anti-corruption safeguards, human rights protections, and public participation in decision-making.

We are not asking for disorder.

We are asking for accountability.

We are not asking for another consultation process that can be ignored.

We are calling for a formal legal process that must be answered.

We support the introduction and passage of the Constitutional and Public Integrity Review Bill.

Signed:

Name: _____

Region: _____

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Signature: _____

Date: _____