

Keeping public spaces safe

ACT will keep New Zealand's streets, transport hubs, and shared spaces safe. We will create a new licence for trained security professionals, including guards and transport officers. These licenced professionals will have new powers to protect the public until Police arrive.

Retail crime and antisocial behaviour remains a source of fear and hardship for New Zealanders. When people don't feel safe visiting their local shops, they shop online instead, draining jobs and life from town centres. Crime costs the sector \$2.6 billion a year, estimates Retail NZ's Crime Report. When people don't feel safe on public transport, they pay more to use alternative options, or become isolated at home.

Private uniformed professionals could bridge the gap between stretched Police and underequipped community patrols. Yet security guards and transport officers have no more legal power than any other member of the public.

ACT will create a new Accredited Security Operator (ASO) licence. Guards with this licence would have elevated – but clearly limited – powers to keep shared spaces safe, at little or no cost to the taxpayer.

New Zealand has already given certain security guards some of these powers, such as Parliamentary Security and Court Security Officers, through ad hoc legislation. ACT's policy would allow retailers, business associations, transport operators, and others to deploy guards with elevated powers.

01 Real training and education

An ASO will be held to high standards, with training and education to understand the limits of their power and how to safely deal with situations. Accreditation will be to a formal education standard delivered by approved training agencies. Licences will be issued by the Private Security Licensing Authority. There will be strong safeguards in place. Any ASO in breach of the code of practice will have his or her licence revoked and, with it, any legal privileges it provides.

ACT will require ASOs to go through real training and education to ensure high quality.

02 Verify identity and briefly detain

An ASO may ask for a person's name and address where they have reasonable grounds to believe that person has offended on the premises or is under a trespass notice. Crucially, if the person refuses, and refuses to leave the premises, they may be detained only as long as is reasonably necessary, and no more than 30 minutes, with Police called as soon as it is safe to do so.

ACT will empower ASOs to require identity and briefly detain a non-compliant person until Police arrive.

03 Issue cross-precinct exclusions

Persistent offenders move from shop to shop. An ASO may issue a written, conduct-based exclusion notice on the occupier's behalf where there are reasonable grounds, running for up to three years and applying across multiple premises, such as across a business association. These are individualised notices held on a register run under the Privacy Act.

ACT will empower ASOs to issue conduct-based exclusion notices enforceable across an agreed precinct.

04 Remove people who pose a risk

An ASO will have clear statutory authority to remove a person where they have reasonable grounds to believe that person is causing or likely to cause violence or property damage, poses a risk to safety, or is breaching the venue's conditions of entry or code of conduct.

ACT will empower ASOs to remove people who threaten safety, cause damage, or breach venue conditions.

05 Use reasonable force as a last resort

An ASO will have clear grounds to use reasonable force to remove or detain a person, or to prevent re-entry after entry has been refused or an exclusion issued, but only where they reasonably believe it is necessary. Force must be proportionate, a genuine last resort after a reasonable chance to comply, and must cease the moment the person complies or Police arrive.

ACT will authorise ASOs to use reasonable, proportionate force as a last resort, with clear limits.

06 Consent-based entry and safety searches

An ASO may carry out consent-based bag or pat-down searches as a condition of entry, and a person who refuses can be turned away. Crucially, they will also have clear statutory authority to request a consent-based search on the premises where they reasonably suspect a safety risk or prohibited item. A refusal may result in removal from the property.

ACT will ensure ASOs can use consent-based entry and safety searches, with refusal meaning no entry.

Every New Zealander deserves to feel safe doing everyday things like shopping, catching the train or bus, or just walking through town. ACT will unlock New Zealand's potential by empowering communities and businesses to stand up for themselves against crime.