

# Governance Policy

The Green Party envisions an Aotearoa New Zealand where our governing structures uphold the rangatiratanga of iwi and hapū and provide for a high quality of life for all. In Government, the Green Party will boost the nationwide dialogue of constitutional reform that is grounded in He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We will constitutionally recognise Papatūānuku and enshrine her and her descendants' inherent rights. We will ensure our governance structures are open and accountable: empowering the Ombudsman, broadening the OIA and establishing a culture of open government. We will establish a free, accessible, and public repository of all released official information, and require that all appropriate information related to a decision is released as soon as possible to support proactive public engagement.

## Vision

**Accessible, fair and inclusive governance honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi.**

## Values and Principles

Governance structures, activities, and processes (at local and central levels) must align with the following values and principles:

- *Tikanga*: Governance systems must uphold the rights of tangata whenua and the responsibilities of tangata Tiriti under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- *Community*: Decision-making and governance systems must build social cohesion, recognise the importance of personal and collective relationships, and provide a safe and accessible space for all to be effectively heard. Marginalised voices must be elevated, through honest and informed dialogue that builds collective action to protect the rights of all.
- *Belonging*: All communities and their cultures must be accepted in Aotearoa New Zealand; everyone understands their relationship and responsibilities to Te Tiriti. Human rights must be protected and realised.
- *Place*: Papatūānuku must be embedded in the foundation of our governance. Decision-making works in the best interests of current and future generations, and our ecosystems. Aotearoa New Zealand's independence must be safeguarded and protected against abuses of power and privilege.
- *Balance*: Governance systems must balance concepts of power to protect the needs and rights of tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, and the natural world. Decision-making must be decolonised and transparent, centering Te Tiriti and tikanga to lead to empowering outcomes for everyone.

- *Conciliation:* Governance systems must facilitate productive and effective relationships between rangatiratanga and kāwanatanga. Policy and public decision-making must follow Te Tiriti to empower marginalised groups.
- *Structure:* The separation of the legislative, judicial and executive functions of government must be upheld, with decision-making devolved to take place as close as possible to those affected by the decision. Governance and the public service must be resilient, with sufficient funding, capability and support to carry out their mandated and social responsibility functions.
- *Openness:* Accountability and transparency are essential for ensuring democratic and good decision-making. Decisions for an environmentally sound and socially just future must be accessible, challengeable, and made through participatory processes.

## Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

*"Māori will be empowered and resourced within a kaupapa Māori framework to support restorative and rehabilitative justice and provide for the well-being of whānau, the environment and our natural ecosystems."*

*"Our democracy will be accessible and enable inclusive, participatory decisions, where people can influence the collective choices that affect them."*

Actions in this policy that will help achieve this include:

- Ensure Aotearoa New Zealand engages in a process of constitutional transformation as outlined in Matike Mai. (1.2)
- Contribute to constitutional arrangements that uphold He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene (the 1835 Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, reflect the whakapapa of tangata whenua, and affirm tino rangatiratanga. (1.3.1)
- Ensure that high levels of participation, inclusive of marginalised voices, informs public decision-making. (3.2)
- Ensure that Māori world views and the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are understood and honoured throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. (1.4)
- Ensure that government actions and policies nurture and protect the natural world while securing a high quality of life for all people. (2.2)
- Enhance the accessibility of pathways to participate in and challenge public decision-making. (2.4)

## Connected Policies

Governance naturally hits all aspects of our lives and environments. All our policies explore how decisions should be made about that topic. However, other policies expand on the broad approach in this policy:

- Budgeting, expenditure and investment by public decision-making bodies, to provide assets and services that support wellbeing, now and for future generations ([Government in the Economy Policy](#))
- Civics education and public education covering Te Tiriti o Waitangi, He Whakaputanga, and ongoing Crown-iwi relationships ([Education Policy](#))

Our [Tiriti o Waitangi Policy](#) defines the end goal of this governance policy, of how Te Tiriti could be fully realised.

## Policy Positions

### 1. [Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Democracy](#)

#### *Issues*

Te Tiriti o Waitangi constitutes a partnership agreement with the Crown. Despite this, governing structures in Aotearoa New Zealand are built from a Westminster system that does not give effect to the articles of Te Tiriti. Legislation tends to make reference to interpreted principles rather than the articles of Te Tiriti. Forced to operate within a colonising system, Māori are blocked from giving full effect to tino rangatiratanga. This violates the rights of tangata whenua and threatens the legitimacy of the Aotearoa New Zealand government. Even within this system, Māori representation in our political systems is insufficient and at risk of further erosion. Clear and actionable solutions are required that will give full effect to Te Tiriti.

#### *Actions*

- 1.1. Facilitate, through partnership with iwi and hapū, pathways that consistently enable Māori to make decisions that affect Māori, including by:
  - 1.1.1. Adequately resourcing iwi and hapū to conduct their customary role as kaitiaki, and support publicly funded bodies to proactively engage;
  - 1.1.2. Prioritising actions and allocating resources using a Tiriti-based, future-focused, equitable approach;
  - 1.1.3. Ensuring all publicly funded agencies actively reflect and demonstrate how they are giving effect to Te Tiriti, including how they engage iwi and hapū views in the functioning of their agency;
  - 1.1.4. Adopting leadership models from te ao Māori and Pacific cultures;
  - 1.1.5. Guaranteeing Māori representation in public decision-making bodies, as agreed with all affected iwi and hapū.
- 1.2. Ensure Aotearoa New Zealand engages in a process of constitutional transformation as outlined in Matike Mai, including by:
  - 1.2.1. Developing a written constitution for Aotearoa New Zealand, through extensive public engagement supported by an independent constitutional commission; and

- 1.2.2. Facilitating ongoing public dialogue on constitutional transformation, including constitutional structures and constitutional values.
- 1.3. Contribute to constitutional arrangements that:
  - 1.3.1. Uphold He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene (the 1835 Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, reflect the whakapapa of tangata whenua, and affirm tino rangatiratanga;
  - 1.3.2. Reflect who Aotearoa New Zealand is, the diversity and inclusivity of our society;
  - 1.3.3. Show a commitment to radical equality and are grounded in relationship-building;
  - 1.3.4. Respect the interrelationships between people and our environment; and
  - 1.3.5. Provide equitable and accessible governance arrangements for all.
- 1.4. Ensure that Māori world views and the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are understood and honoured throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, including by:
  - 1.4.1. Supporting local communities and decision-makers in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including engaging with their local iwi and hapū; and
  - 1.4.2. Encouraging governing bodies to appoint Māori leaders, and be guided by Māori values, language and tikanga.

## 2. Limiting structures

### *Issues*

Government frameworks are limiting necessary decisions for a sustainable and just future. Accountability mechanisms often rely on long and expensive procedures, such as judicial review. This disempowers communities to advocate for themselves and the next generations.

### *Actions*

- 2.1. Ensure official information is shared promptly in an accessible form and preserved for transparency and accountability, including by:
  - 2.1.1. Empowering and adequately funding the Ombudsman to:
    - 2.1.1.1. Ensure agencies respond to recommendations and orders made after investigating an OIA complaint;
    - 2.1.1.2. Monitor, receive and publish agencies' actions in response to recommendations and orders; and
    - 2.1.1.3. Proactively enforce agencies' compliance with their legal duties;
  - 2.1.2. Amending the official information legislation to:
    - 2.1.2.1. Cover all publicly funded agencies and Parliamentary services; and

- 2.1.2.2. Establish an urgency clause to prioritise requests that are relevant to public interest in the short term;
- 2.1.3. Supporting compliance with the OIA by the public service, including providing training and resources, and building a culture of open government; and
- 2.1.4. Establishing a free, public, and accessible central repository of all released official information.
- 2.2. Ensure that government actions and policies nurture and protect the natural world while securing a high quality of life for all people, including by:
  - 2.2.1. Reporting on their anticipated positive and adverse impacts on the four well beings within ecological limits and on future generations;
  - 2.2.2. Enhancing legal status of Papatūānuku through constitutional recognition of her and her descendants' inherent rights, including through legal personhood and independent monitoring mechanisms; and
  - 2.2.3. Establishing mandatory public reporting processes around environmental impacts of decision-making, procurement and investment.
- 2.3. Ensure that all people can meaningfully participate in and challenge decisions made about them, their communities, and their environments, including by:
  - 2.3.1. Establishing an independent body which can investigate, on behalf of affected individuals or groups, the decisions of all publicly funded agencies, statutory decision-makers, and any groups carrying out public or statutory functions.
- 2.4. Enhance the accessibility of pathways to participate in and challenge public decision-making, including by:
  - 2.4.1. Resourcing support services, including legal aid, friends of submitters, amicus curiae, or other services to enable participation; and
  - 2.4.2. Increasing systems for holding the Executive branch of Government and Parliament accountable, including by:
    - 2.4.2.1. Increasing the number of MPs;
    - 2.4.2.2. Enhancing Select Committees with more resources and powers for investigating and researching government affairs; and
    - 2.4.2.3. Increasing and improving independent mechanisms for scrutinising executive power.
- 2.5. Ensure that policy development and implementation is alert and responsive to unintended outcomes, including by:
  - 2.5.1. Providing training for elected representatives and the public service on unconscious bias and marginalisation;

- 2.5.2. Evaluating all new policies to develop an evidence base from which to adapt and improve policy design and implementation;
  - 2.5.3. Requiring regulatory impact assessments to include social, environmental, cultural and health impacts and Tiriti implications, and to seek and transparently respond to specialist advice; and
  - 2.5.4. Using an adaptive process to evaluate policy implementation, collect more evidence, and adjust actions in line with new evidence.
- 2.6. Ensure that public services uphold the values of this policy and are straightforward to access, integrated, affordable, and efficient, including by:
- 2.6.1. Using a nationally planned and monitored, regionally coordinated and delivered, and locally tailored approach to providing public services that meet basic needs, including preventative or early intervention services

### **3. An Equal Voice for All**

#### *Issues*

Some groups, including prisoners, youth, and New Zealanders living overseas, unfairly experience disenfranchisement, a lack of representation, and/or marginalisation in democratic processes, which effectively tells them their voices do not matter. Some New Zealanders do not engage in democratic processes due to disengagement, insufficient resources, safety concerns or accessibility needs. Political self-interest and other factors limit evidence-based governance for the public good.

#### *Actions*

- 3.1. Balance direct and proportional representation within a fair and just governance system, including by:
  - 3.1.1. Extending the election access fund to include local government;
  - 3.1.2. Ensuring that no person can vote in multiple local government elections due to owning property in multiple Council areas; and
  - 3.1.3. Reforming the Electoral Act 1993 to make it comprehensive, and fit for purpose, by incorporating the changes set out in the Independent Electoral Review 2024, including:
    - 3.1.3.1. Extending the right to vote to prisoners and those over 16;
    - 3.1.3.2. Lowering the party-vote threshold to 3.5% and abolishing the one-electorate seat threshold;
    - 3.1.3.3. Adopting single transferable vote (STV) for elected decision making bodies; and
    - 3.1.3.4. Funding the Electoral Commission to conduct all elections.

- 3.2. Ensure that high levels of participation, inclusive of marginalised voices, informs public decision-making, including by:
  - 3.2.1. Requiring governance bodies to collaboratively design and implement community-based decision-making processes (e.g. participatory budgeting or citizens assemblies);
  - 3.2.2. Setting consultation deadlines and releasing information to facilitate maximum public participation wherever possible;
  - 3.2.3. Resourcing tangata whenua and marginalised groups to participate and advocate;
  - 3.2.4. Requiring decision-makers to reflect on and include any missing voices after seeking public input; and
  - 3.2.5. Creating a safe and culturally sound environment within decision-making bodies.
- 3.3. Ensure decision-making bodies minimise vested interests and make strong independent decisions, including by:
  - 3.3.1. Reforming campaign finance by:
    - 3.3.1.1. Limiting political donations to enrolled individuals;
    - 3.3.1.2. Having the electoral commission cap political donations at an equitable level;
    - 3.3.1.3. Increasing public funding of campaigns;
    - 3.3.1.4. Developing a democratic voucher system;
    - 3.3.1.5. Tightening the rolling disclosure system;
    - 3.3.1.6. Considering any spending on authorised advertisements to be a donation to the party or political candidate; and
    - 3.3.1.7. Significantly lowering the threshold for donations to be disclosed;
  - 3.3.2. Creating clear regulations around lobbying and disclosure to ensure fair access, transparency, and accountability;
  - 3.3.3. Ensuring all legislation is subject to select committee scrutiny, including requiring legislation passed under urgency to have a sunset clause and return to Parliament for ordinary processes within the same term; and
  - 3.3.4. Exploring mechanisms to hold Ministers to account for conduct or conflicts of interest that breach public trust.