



Submission to the Treaty Principles Bill

December 10, 2024

Climate Action Aotearoa's Commitment to Climate Justice

Climate Action Aotearoa is dedicated to advancing climate justice and fostering environmental stewardship for the benefit of all communities in Aotearoa. Rooted in the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we believe that a just transition to a climate-resilient future must be grounded in tika—equity, fairness, and respect for people and whenua alike. Our commitment is to support Māori communities, particularly iwi and hapū, in their leadership role in addressing climate change and environmental degradation.

We respectfully submit our concerns regarding the Treaty Principles Bill and encourage the Select Committee to carefully consider these points and recommend that the Bill does not proceed past second reading.

Our Concerns with the Bill:

- 1. Undermining of the Treaty Partnership:** We are concerned that the Bill will undo decades of progress in strengthening the relationship between Māori and the Crown, and by extension, the relationship between Māori and all communities. The partnership envisioned in Te Tiriti o Waitangi is built on principles of mutual respect, protection, and participation. Any attempt to alter these foundational principles risks undermining the progress we have made towards a more just and equitable society.
- 2. Misinterpretation of Te Tiriti:** Te Tiriti o Waitangi is Aotearoa's founding document, formalising the relationship between Māori and the Crown. We are concerned that the Bill misinterprets the Treaty, particularly the concept of tino rangatiratanga. This is not simply a property right but affirms and guarantees Māori self-determination over lands, resources, and governance.
- 3. Legal and Constitutional Implications:** We are concerned that any attempt to change Aotearoa's constitutional framework could have far-reaching implications for the integrity of our democratic system. This bill itself grossly breaches Te Tiriti o Waitangi by categorically and intentionally excluding Māori from the conversation. It attempts to redefine the founding document without the permission or inclusion of the treaty partners.
- 4. Risk of Division and Distraction:** The Bill has sparked division and concern within communities, particularly when two of the three government coalition parties have

indicated that they will not support it beyond the first reading. We believe the resources and attention spent on this Bill could be better directed toward fostering unity and advancing practical solutions to the climate crisis.

Climate Justice and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Climate change is not just an environmental issue—it is a profound social justice issue. The impacts of climate change are not felt equally, and Māori, particularly those in rural and coastal communities, are among the most vulnerable to its effects. Rising sea levels, drought, and other climate-related disasters disproportionately affect Māori communities, and any response to climate change must be built on the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure fairness, equity, and justice for all.

A just transition must involve Māori as equal partners and leaders in climate action, respecting and uplifting their tino rangatiratanga over their whenua and resources. By working in true partnership with Māori, we can develop climate solutions that are grounded in both modern science and traditional Māori knowledge, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for everyone in Aotearoa.

Key Recommendations for Climate Action:

- **Support Tino Rangatiratanga:** We advocate for the restoration of traditional Māori governance structures (kaitiakitanga) over land, water, and natural resources. This will ensure sustainable land use, biodiversity restoration, and ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.
- **Integrate Māori Knowledge in Policy:** Māori knowledge, or mātauranga Māori, should be fully integrated into the development of climate change policies and strategies. Māori worldviews and values must be embedded in decision-making processes at all levels of government.
- **Prioritise Climate Justice for Māori Communities:** Climate justice requires that resources for climate adaptation and mitigation be distributed equitably. Māori communities, particularly in rural and coastal areas, need access to the tools, support, and resources to build resilience against climate impacts, including sustainable housing, energy solutions, and land management practices.
- **Ensure Māori Leadership in Climate Action:** Māori leadership is essential to addressing the climate crisis. Any climate response framework must recognise Māori as leaders and equal partners, ensuring that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is honoured in all aspects of our climate strategy.

Conclusion:

Climate Action Aotearoa calls on the Government to implement the recommendations of The Waitangi Tribunal's updated report on the Treaty Principles Bill.

Māori leadership and the recognition of the pre-existing rights of Māori over their whenua and resources are essential to securing a positive future for Aotearoa. Climate change

disproportionately impacts Māori communities, and climate justice must be centred on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ensuring that Māori are integral to our climate solutions.

By honouring the partnership envisioned in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we can foster a unified, resilient, and climate-conscious future that is grounded in respect for both tangata and whenua.

Signed,
Climate Action Aotearoa