



New Zealand
Speech-language
Therapists' Association
*Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika
Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa*

Submission to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill

Submitted by:

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Introduction

The Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) opposes the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill (the Bill).

As a professional organisation committed to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all our work, we believe the Bill does not adequately reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural foundation nor uphold the tangata whenua mana.

Below, we outline our concerns regarding the Bill and its potential impacts on our sector and wider society.

1. Narrow Definition of Principles

The Bill seeks to codify the principles of the Treaty into legislation. However, the proposed principles are narrowly defined and fail to reflect the dynamic, relational, and contextual nature of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. By prioritising rigid interpretations, the Bill undermines the nuanced and evolving understanding required to honour te Tiriti in contemporary Aotearoa. The principles proposed:

Overemphasise Crown sovereignty (Principle 1) without acknowledging the reciprocal partnership central to Te Tiriti.

Limit the recognition of tangata whenua rights to Treaty settlements (Principle 2), which restricts their application to broader socio-political contexts.

Focus on equality (Principle 3) in a manner that risks perpetuating inequities by ignoring the importance of equity and tino rangatiratanga.

2. Contradiction of Te Tiriti o Waitangi Values

The Bill's focus on defining principles legislatively conflicts with the spirit of Te Tiriti, which emphasises partnership, protection, and participation. By privileging a fixed interpretation, the Bill could sideline the lived experiences of Māori and erode the Crown's responsibility to engage with iwi and hapū as Treaty partners in good faith.

3. Lack of Genuine Consultation

The introduction of this Bill has not been accompanied by widespread or meaningful consultation with Māori. This process undermines the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti to actively seek and incorporate Māori perspectives in decision-making. Without robust consultation, the legitimacy of this Bill is inherently flawed.

4. Potential to Undermine Sector-Specific Progress

For professions such as speech-language therapy, where equity and cultural responsiveness are core values, this Bill risks destabilising progress made in applying Te Tiriti in practical, meaningful ways. NZSTA and our members rely on the flexibility to engage with Te Tiriti articles as living, relational commitments. A static, one-size-fits-all definition imposed by legislation could hinder such work and diminish the ability to effectively address inequities in our field.

5. Absence of a Bicultural Framework

The Bill does not provide a robust mechanism for balancing the dual texts of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (te reo Māori and English) or for addressing historical injustices. By prioritising a singular interpretation, it sidelines the bicultural identity of Aotearoa and marginalises Māori worldviews.

Conclusion

NZSTA urges the Government to withdraw the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill. Instead, we recommend an approach that centres Māori voices, respects the relational nature of Te Tiriti, and honours its intent through genuine partnership and co-design. The complexities of applying Te Tiriti in contemporary Aotearoa require an adaptive, inclusive framework—not a rigid legislative codification.

We would oppose any future referendum on Tiriti o Waitangi.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further and contribute to a process that genuinely upholds the mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Thank you for considering our submission.

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NZSTA wishes to have an opportunity to present to the select committee.