

07/01/2025

To: The Justice Committee

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

We are writing on behalf of the Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council, a group of rangatahi volunteers aged 12 - 24 from across the Ōtautahi region. This submission is based on our external survey for Rangatahi, 'Rangatahi Feedback - Treaty Principles Bill', some quick polls of our instagram (see attached), as well as discussions and surveys conducted internally with our membership of 25 volunteers aged 12 - 24. While we acknowledge that we are not representative of all young people in Christchurch we have a mandate as an organisation to collect, collate, and share the views presented to us by our young people. Young people may disagree with the statements made throughout this submission, and we would expect and value this, as no two people have the same voice or opinion.

At the Youth Council, we believe it is vital to oppose the Treaty Principles Bill because it dishonors the spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which will negatively impact all people in this country and could continue to perpetuate systemic inequities, especially for Māori communities. As young people, we are deeply invested in ensuring that policies create a fairer, more just future for all, particularly for Māori youth who are disproportionately affected by these issues. The passing of this Bill could undermine the progress we need to achieve equality and genuine partnership, so we must speak out.

While we are nonpartisan and do not align with any political party, we recognise the importance of having a voice on political issues that impact young people. Our non-partisan approach allows us to focus on the issues themselves, rather than party politics, ensuring that we advocate for the best interests of our communities. Moreover, we recognise the privilege we have to be in a position where we can submit, speak out, and influence decisions. Many young people, particularly those from marginalised or disadvantaged communities, may not have the same resources, platform, or ability to submit on issues like this. As a result, it is our duty to use our voices to stand up for those who might not have the opportunity to do so. By submitting on this Bill, we are acting not only on behalf of ourselves but also as advocates for those whose voices may not be heard in these critical discussions. It is our responsibility to ensure that all perspectives, especially those that have been historically excluded, are considered in the decision-making process.

Below are personalised responses from Christchurch Youth Council members answering the questions, "Who am I?" and "Why Do I Oppose the Treaty Principles Bill?" We have included these in our submission to demonstrate that this Bill matters to and will affect a diverse range of young people.

Individual Response #1:

My name is Thomas Richards, a New Zealand European 17-year-old Male from Christchurch. I currently work in the retail sector as well as studying Law at the University of Canterbury. I've served as a member of the executive committee of the Christchurch Youth Council since 2023.

The key reason I oppose the Treaty Principles Bill is the division that it generates across the nation. This division doesn't stem from agreement or disagreement with the Bill, as I believe a large majority of Kiwis are opposed. However, at a time when many families are struggling to put food on the table and pay their bills in such strenuous economic times - it seems

like a misdirection of the Government to focus on constitutional affairs during a cost of living crisis. I believe that in a time when Kiwis have to work together in the current tough economic climate, being divided over an issue that many don't have the time to educate themselves on will only result in poor policy and an increased disillusionment with the establishment of Government for not focussing on the issues that impact citizens the most.

Individual Response #2:

I'm Lucas, a 17-year-old New Zealand European from Christchurch. I'm a general member at Christchurch Youth Council. The whole reason I joined the council was to advocate for voices to be heard and to have representatives from groups often overlooked be involved in decisions made for the collective equity and well-being of New Zealanders.

I oppose the Bill for the lack of Māori voice in the creation of the Bill. The Treaty of Waitangi establishes a partnership between Māori and the Crown. To isolate core principles of the Treaty without meaningful Māori input invalidates this partnership. The lack of Māori voices in the Bill's creation constitutes a unilateral decision by the Crown, undermining the spirit of negotiation and shared decision-making which has been a part of New Zealand since the Treaty was signed. Demoting Māori from dual sovereignty to effectively reducing them to subjects rather than partners in the Crown-Māori relationship is why I oppose this Bill.

Individual Response #3:

My name is Vicky, I am eighteen years old and I am the Chairperson for the Runaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi in 2025. I am female and was born in Aotearoa and my ethnicity is Chinese and Indonesian. I'm a second year university student studying Geography and Environmental Science with a minor in Political Science and International Relations so I have a strong passion in protecting our natural environment for generations to come.

Te Tiriti provides outcomes that benefit everyone in NZ and not just Māori. The Treaty Principles Bill undermines existing agencies like the Waitangi Tribunal for protection around our natural environment. The Treaty Principles Bill claims to redefine the treaty relationship. Principle 3 states that "everyone is equal before the law" yet the equality of New Zealanders is already protected by the Human Rights Law and the Bill of Rights. The Bill is completely unnecessary as it erases Te Tiriti which maintains the rights of Māori. The lack of consultation with any affected Māori party is unfair. As young people, we know how unjust being excluded from decision making processes that affect us is and that is why I oppose this Bill.

Individual Response #4:

My name is Ashwini Raazesh, I am a nineteen year old female and am the secretary for Runaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi | Christchurch Youth Council for 2025. I am ethnically Indian and both a New Zealand and US American citizen. I have lived in Christchurch for most of my life and am a proud Tangata Tiriti. I am a second year student at the University of Canterbury studying a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, Politics and Economics with a minor in European Union Studies.

I oppose the Treaty Principles Bill for many reasons from its divisiveness, to every aspect of how its been pushed through, the lack of consultation with Māori as the treaty partner, the political grandstanding it is representative of, the bad faith with which it has been enacted, and how fundamentally and efficiently it dishonours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Tangata Whenua, and this country. I am very proud to be an immigrant in this country, it is also very meaningful to me that as an immigrant I have a unique and very real place in Aotearoa through Te Tiriti as a Tauwiwi. Te Tiriti is what gives everyone in

Aotearoa their identity as a person here, it is fundamentally unifying and has so much power as both a piece of our history, as legislation, and as a symbol. Undermining that with this ill conceived Bill is unconscionable and continues the cycle of disregarding indigenous rights and dishonouring of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which is why I oppose this Bill.

Individual Response #5:

Ko Sugyan Pun tōku ingoa. I am 17 and Singaporean-Nepalese. I am currently based in Ōtautahi, studying at Ara. I am a member of the Christchurch Youth Council.

As a young Singaporean-Nepali of Magar heritage, I strongly oppose the Treaty Principles Bill. The Treaty of Waitangi was established to protect the Māori people, their land, and their way of life. The principles of the Treaty must be upheld to ensure the continued recognition and respect of Māori as the tangata whenua of this land. The Treaty is meant to be a safeguard for Māori rights, and any attempt to change it should be carefully considered, with the voices of Māori at the centre of the conversation. As someone with indigenous heritage, I stand in solidarity with the Māori. The struggle for indigenous rights is one shared by many communities, and it is important that we respect the Treaty as a living document that reflects the ongoing partnership between Māori and the Crown. Changing its principles undermines this partnership and risks further marginalising the very people it was intended to protect.

Individual Response #6:

Ka kaukau ngā ika ki ngā hao o te waka o Ngātokimatawhaorua.

Ka āta titiro ahau ki ngā wai o Waimā.

Ka rere tāku manu ki te tihi o te maunga o Huruiki.

Ka karanga ngā reo o te marae i Whakapara ki a au.

Ko Motukōwhai tōku tūrangawaewae.

He uri ahau nō Ngāpuhi, nō Ngāti Hao, nō Ngāti Wai, nō Ngāti Mutunga, nō Ingarahi, nō Tati anō hoki.

He ākongā ahau i te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha ka tīmata i te tau tuarua.

E ako ana ahau ki te whiwhi atu he tohu paetahi ture, ā, he tohu paetahi toi anō hoki.

Ko ahau te tiamana tuarua o te Runaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi.

Tekau mā whitu ōku tau.

Ko Whatuariki tōku ingoa.

I strongly oppose the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill. There are numerous inequities exacerbated by this Bill, however, here I have chosen to focus on Principle 2. This Principle is not currently in legislation and will, therefore, have the most impact if the Bill is passed. Whereas Principle 1 and Principle 3, listed under clause 6 of the Bill, are already enshrined in legislation under the Constitution Act 1986 and the Bill of Rights Act 1990. Principle 2 disenfranchises hapū and iwi Māori for having different rights from everyone else under the Treaty of Waitangi. The application of these rights is limited to settlements of historical treaty claims that refer to Crown actions prior to 21 September 1992. However, the Waitangi Tribunal stopped accepting new historical treaty claims after 1 September 2008. Besides existing Treaty settlement Acts and ongoing unsettled historical treaty claims (that could remain as such for years), hapū and iwi Māori would have no right to rangatiratanga under the Treaty of Waitangi. Moreover, clause 7 of the Bill requires its three Principles to be used as the only Treaty Principles allowed to interpret every enactment relevant to the Treaty of Waitangi. If this Bill were to pass, hapū and iwi Māori would definitively lose the protections of all other Treaty Principles that were developed from decades

of settled treaty claims. Every New Zealander will be adversely affected without those protections. Whether that is due to the government selling land to overseas multinational conglomerates who exploit Papatūānuku for profit, or hapū Māori continuing to receive infinitesimal concessions as redress for Crown breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Nō reira, abandon the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill. Toitū Te Tiriti! Āke ake ake!

Individual Response #7:

Kia Ora

Ko Aoraki tōku maunga.

Ko Waimakariri tōku awa.

Ko Ngāti Pākehā tōku iwi.

Nō Ōtautahi ahau.

Ko Ruth tōku whaea.

Ko Matt tōku matua.

Ko Ruby Love-Smith tōku ingoa.

The Treaty Principles Bill does not honor the commitment made to tangata whenua. Not only does the Bill blatantly misinterpret Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it disrespects and disregards the actual principles outlined in New Zealand's founding document. As a child of immigrant parents, Te Tiriti gives me the right to live in Aotearoa. It is a document that all New Zealanders are bound by INCLUDING the Government. It cannot be dismissed when you want to go oil mining or engage in other disrespectful and harmful ventures. Te Tiriti is not a bargaining chip and deserves the utmost respect. Tangata Whenua deserve respect. New Zealand deserves respect and our commitments deserve respect. This Bill is a step backwards that would undermine progress. It is divisive and even its introduction to parliament has already taken our race relations backwards.

Individual Response #8:

My name is Elsie McAllum, I'm 16 and currently going into my fourth year of school at Cashmere High School. I'm of NZ European and Māori descent with my iwi being Tainui. As of 2025, my role in the youth council is an executive member.

The negative effects on Māori the Bill would have are why I oppose the Treaty Principles Bill. The removal of special considerations for Māori not specifically stated in treaty settlements is very problematic. The deceptive nature of the 'equality' proposed in the Bill, which frees the Crown from having to do division of natural resources, target funding for Māori and remove delivery systems that deal with the lasting effects of colonialism, is awful.

Individual Response #9:

Kia Ora, I'm Chloe Dille, I'm twelve years old and I am female. My ethnicity is Bulgarian. What I do is school and I am a new member to CYC. I think that is very unfair to Kiwis. Took the Māori rights away from the Māori. People need to be treated with respect!

Individual Response #10:

My name is Bethany Gibson and I am an 18-year-old Pākehā student who is the Communications Officer for CYC.

I oppose the Treaty Principles Bill because it undermines the original intent of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Bill prioritises the government's interpretation of Treaty principles over genuine partnership and the meaningful recognition of Māori

rights. It will weaken the ability for Māori to hold the Crown accountable for past and ongoing breaches of Treaty obligations. Ultimately, I believe this Bill does not foster the equitable relationships that the Treaty was intended to create between Māori and the Crown. Instead, it risks perpetuating a system that does not fully honour the Treaty's promise of the three "P's": protection, partnership, and participation.

Individual Response #11:

Kia ora, ko Anna ahau. I am a 23-year-old researcher in policy at the University of Canterbury. Alongside this, I hold a BA in Philosophy and Sociology and a postgraduate qualification in Political Science and International Relations.

I value Māori rights and freedom as they are essential to frame policy around universal rights and indigenous knowledge. We should all use kaitiakitanga to guard and safekeep New Zealand and by working together we all achieve more as tangata Tiriti and rangatahi. By being part of the Christchurch Youth Council, we can empower young people to stand up for what is right and speak out when others feel disenfranchised and marginalised. I oppose the Treaty Principles Bill as it reinterprets the existing Treaty Principles which have been carefully thought about and deliberated on, undermining the whole partnership built between the Crown and Māori. This will unilaterally rewrite legislation and misconstrue public opinion to something that was never agreed upon by the other party.

Individual Response #12:

My name is Ashlee O'Brien, I am seventeen years old, female and of Māori and Samoan descent. I am a general member at CYC.

The Treaty Principles Bill is unfair, unnecessary and completely disregards Māori families and their heritage so I oppose it.

Individual Response #13:

My name is Ruby-Grace Miller, I'm 16 years old and proud to be a Kiwi. My mum's side of the family has been in the South Island since before the 4 ships and I fully identify as a Kiwi. I love Aotearoa New Zealand and I recognise its history, the good and the bad. I recognise the privileges I have just living in this country but that doesn't mean I am in need of privileges I don't already have. I can recognise that systems are built up to help people and legislation is made to support our community. I've been on both ends of support as a young student with learning disabilities and that has taught me a lot about why certain privileges matter. I am an executive member of the Christchurch youth council, at the youth council we strive to give all youth opportunities and build them up in our community.

The treaty was signed between the Chiefs and the Crown. All responsibility for the Treaty implementation, the adherence to its principles, and the consequences that follow rest squarely with them. These were the two groups who were consulted during the drafting of the Treaty's original principles, ensuring that their views and interests were central to its formation. However, we are all too aware that the English translations of the Māori versions of the Treaty have often failed to align with the intent and meaning of the original language. This misalignment has led to significant misunderstandings and injustices in the past, resulting in the atrocities we are still grappling with today. It is crucial to recognize that these historical discrepancies have shaped the current situation and must be addressed in any future agreements or actions. The agreement made in this Bill directly affects both the Chiefs and the Crown, as they are the primary stakeholders involved. However, its impact does not end there. The implications of this Bill extend to the wider communities and systems they represent, with far-reaching effects that will be felt across generations. While the Chiefs and the Crown hold ultimate responsibility for the execution of this agreement, it is essential to recognize that the legacy of past errors must not be repeated. It is not the role of this Government to re-translate or reinterpret what was agreed upon by the Chiefs and the Crown. Any attempts to alter or

distort the original terms risk further injustice and must be rejected. Instead, we must ensure that the original principles, as understood by both parties at the time, are respected and faithfully upheld in both spirit and practice. That is why I oppose this Bill.

Below is the submission written by members of our youth council, Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi, that is representative of our views. This section was written in conjunction with forty five rangatahi responses to our survey 'Rangatahi Feedback - Treaty Principles Bill'.

The Treaty Principles Bill is divisive and inequitable because it fundamentally alters the relationship between Māori and the New Zealand Government by removing key elements that were agreed to in Te Tiriti O Waitangi that guarantee Māori sovereignty. By eliminating the term 'tino rangatiratanga' which represents Māori authority to govern their own lives and communities, the Bill undermines the core principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, effectively limiting Māori authority. It also limits the ability for Māori to hold the government accountable against unfair actions and ignorance towards Māori people.

The Treaty Principles Bill not only misunderstands the realities of what Te Tiriti o Waitangi guarantees Māori communities, but more egregiously ignores the historical circumstances and colonial legacies that have shaped this country. The hypocrisy of these actions were discussed hotly as the historical circumstances surrounding the Crown's willingness to disregard Te Tiriti o Waitangi are perpetuated once again here with the Treaty Principles Bill. This disregarding of our history shows a deep negligence in this leadership's ability to govern and their inability to fairly and authentically represent their diverse constituency. It also shows a fundamental divorce of understanding around our indigenous communities' rights, status, and a lack of value towards them and our surveyees were greatly concerned by this.

Māori are a minority in this country today due to colonialism, something that our surveyees felt very strongly about and placed a lot of importance in. This Bill's proposed changes are being sold as an equity issue but equity does not always entail equality for marginalized and minority communities. Our responses showed that the young people we represent believe that this is the case here. Any special protections and rights afforded to Māori are designed to ensure cultural protection, act as historical redress, and help uplift people and this matters greatly to us. The Bill also takes an assimilationist perspective that is fundamentally reductive, as it puts forth a bad faith interpretation that by receiving redress for the Crown's ill actions, Māori receive some kind of special status that they are not entitled to. To change all of the language in Te Tiriti o Waitangi to being universalised, means that Māori cultural heritage does not deserve special consideration as New Zealand's indigenous and now minority culture. The Treaty Principles Bill misrepresents the texts of both translations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the collectively held understanding of its pillars. By changing the Māori specific aspects of the principles, it totally undermines its purpose and functionality. Many of our surveyees felt that this was an act of bad faith by this leadership and removed any pretence that this Bill is a genuine interpretation of Te Tiriti and not a disrespectful attempt at grandstanding.

We note that many rangatahi think that there is more work to do in the space of upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi currently. We would like to see more done in this space and are disappointed with recent decisions in this space. The cutting of funding and support for critical initiatives—such as the Māori Health Authority, co-governance within the Three Waters programme, and the renaming of government departments back to English—reflects a regressive approach to partnership and equity. Further, cutting funding for Māori language courses for teachers, cancelling funding for Matariki celebrations, and abandoning the Smoke Free policy, which will disproportionately lead to more Māori deaths, all undermine efforts to address systemic inequities faced by Māori communities.

New Zealand is a country with a proud democratic history of fair elections and of guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties and democracy is the backbone of New Zealand's just and fair society. While our democracy is strong it still has flaws. A 'one person one vote system' means that minority communities' values, needs, and perspectives can often be drowned out and left unrecognised and unrepresented in democratic processes. Te Tiriti o Waitangi promised rangatiratanga for Māori and the Crown is obligated to deliver this promise. Under New Zealand's current democracy however, this promise has not been upheld or recognised adequately. New Zealand's democratic system has the power to override Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori voices, votes, and needs leaving them marginalised. Initiatives like Te Aka Whai Ora and Māori Wards were institutions that restored rangatiratanga and were steps in the right direction. The Treaty Principles Bill does not ensure rangatiratanga, instead it undermines Te Tiriti and ensures a democracy that does not recognise or uplift Māori. On that basis alone, as a unilateral undermining of democracy and the rights of tangata whenua under Te Tiriti, the Treaty Principles Bill should be opposed.

The Treaty Principles Bill involves an overly simplistic view of human rights that misrepresents human rights realities and structures with regards to New Zealand, something people are strongly against. Documents like our Bill of Rights enshrine and protect the human rights of all people of New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi does not need to do this as it does not exist for these purposes. Alongside internal domestic legislation there are also international apparatuses such as the UDHR and UN Charter that are specifically designed to protect human rights. The Treaty Principles Bill's Principle 1 and Principle 3 are already enshrined in existing legislation under the Constitution Act 1986 and the Bill of Rights Act 1990, thus these changes are unnecessary. Furthermore, claiming it is a question of human rights is misleading and fallacious. Using the language of human rights as a distraction or facade for this change is irresponsible and misleading. The young people who discussed this point also noted that the choice to be misleading was an example of how this Bill is unnecessary as it does not change the things it claims to change.

As a Youth Council, we have a unique and valuable perspective, regarding the feelings and thoughts of young peoples' understanding and their relationship to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand, something that all people, tangata whenua and tangata tiriti, all understand. It is at the centre of our national identity, our nation and our founding narrative, and it has value beyond these things. Te Tiriti acts as the gateway and foundation as to why everyone in NZ has a place here. It is through Te Tiriti that people are welcomed to this country and have an identity here as Pākehā, Māori, and Tauiwi. Our survey and consultations have shown very clearly that young people tend to have both a deep value of Te Tiriti and a robust understanding of its principles, history, and significance. This should be unsurprising given the number of government supported initiatives regarding Te Ao Māori over the last decade alone. These have been very notable in the education of New Zealand history we have received and from its increased presence in our daily lives. Importantly, these resources have proven to clearly and effectively educate our generation about our history and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. They also imbued us with a value of it and a stronger sense of solidarity and national identity. This demonstrates very definitively that the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are clear and widely understood as they stand with participation, protection, and partnership framing that conversation. People are also very well educated on other aspects of the Treaty as well, such as the differing translations and repercussions of these for example.

The inescapable issue of this Bill revolves around the fact it is drawing the media and people of Aotearoa to something obscene. It degrades Māori worth, culture, and whakapapa. This grandstanding is a conundrum because we have other pressing issues that also need to be addressed such as healthcare and education. Why should we focus on The Treaty Principles Bill when it does not advance us as a nation, but rather divide us? As rangatahi in Ōtautahi, we are taking a stand

and fighting to oppose this Bill as it is culturally insensitive and breaches many partnership agreements of active participation and reciprocity. The Crown, Māori and Government should all be working together, not against each other. It creates major distrust for the citizens and young people of Aotearoa as we are unsure where our futures lie, or what the ongoing implications will be if this Bill is passed. It is also reckless to not consult on the matter and the decision-making process with iwi and community groups.

The Treaty Principles Bill has been criticized for ruining kapa haka in schools, which changes the traditional values and cultural expressions of Māori culture. Kapa haka means a lot to Māori as it shows pride in cultural heritage and expression but it also means a lot to many other students who are Kiwi. However, the Bill's focus on 'Treaty Principles' has led to the distortion of kapa haka practices, pushing educators to prioritize political education over cultural authenticity. It is very unfair to all of the Māori students and their peers.

We also strongly oppose a referendum for the Treaty Principles Bill. Referendums are inequitable and unfair for Indigenous, minority or marginalised communities because they allow the majority to decide on issues affecting these groups, often disregarding their unique needs and historical context. Majority rule can undermine the rights of minority communities, as the general population may not fully understand or appreciate the ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic inequities. This decision-making process also fails to guarantee protections for Indigenous rights and often excludes meaningful consultation with those directly affected.

The Indigenous Voice referendum in Australia is a clear example of these challenges. It sought to establish a permanent Indigenous Voice to Parliament, allowing Indigenous Australians to have a say in policies affecting them. However, the referendum process allowed the wider public to vote on this issue, sidelining Indigenous voices and perspectives. Many voters were not fully informed, leading to misunderstandings, while the majority vote ultimately held the power to decide Indigenous recognition, undermining the principle of self-determination.

Ultimately, the stance of the Treaty Principles Bill redefining the principles is divisive and breeds disunity. This kind of thinking is creating a fractured country that does not hold true to the "right of equality..." as outlined by ACT's David Seymour. This legislation undermines Māori and their indigenous worth and should not be placed into a referendum as many voters are not members of minority communities. They do not have marginalized identities meaning they cannot understand the marginalisation and discrimination that Māori still face today. We are all interconnected and acknowledging the impact, and potentially irreversible damage of this legislation, must open our eyes to the fact that this legislation should not pass.

Ngā Mihi,

On Behalf of Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council Incorporated Executive Committee