



Submission to the Justice Select Committee

Re: Introduction of Treaty Principles Bill to Parliament

With the Treaty Principles Bill passing its first reading in Parliament, the New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA) and Te Oranga (Māori Medical Students' Association Aotearoa) express our grave concern over the dangerous and hateful rhetoric this bill has incited toward Māori. Taura tākuta Māori currently experience racism and discrimination during their placements, and we raise our concern that this bill will exacerbate this further, harming the well-being and safety of our taura. Other countries look towards Aotearoa, New Zealand as a leading example for restoration in race relations, and at the heart of this progress has been the empowerment of tangata whenua. The proposed Treaty Principles Bill seeks to reverse this progress by undermining our obligation as partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and to abolish the promise of Māori tino rangatiratanga enshrined in Te Tiriti.

As partners in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it is our duty to uphold its articles. Te Tiriti forms the foundation of the partnership between tangata whenua and tangata Te Tiriti, enabling Aotearoa to thrive and to flourish. Te Tiriti benefits us all, it teaches us how to care for our land and our people. It ensures the protection of Aotearoa's land, culture, and heritage - for those that came before us, those here now, and those yet to come. The Treaty Principles Bill seeks to redefine the nature of the 184-year agreement between Māori and the crown, without consultation or approval of its original signatories, tangata whenua.

The New Zealand government has a long history of passing legislation that has undermined Māori rights, including the New Zealand Settlements Act of 1863, the Native Schools Act of 1867, and the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907. It is widely recognised that these laws were unjust, and aimed to diminish the culture, rights, and means of Māori. Such legislation has had, and continues to have, a profound negative impact on Māori. In health, Māori remain disproportionately represented in the social determinants of health, with significantly lower life expectancy, higher rates of non-communicable diseases, and over-representation in lower socioeconomic deciles - disparities frequently apparent to our medical taura. The introduction of this bill threatens to repeat these historical injustices.

We stand for an Aotearoa that honours Te Tiriti, not one that seeks to rewrite it. This bill threatens to undo years of progress in race relations and will reverse the advancements that have been made toward achieving health equity, achievements only made possible through consultation and empowerment of tangata whenua. We urge members of the Justice Committee to recognise the impact that this bill has had and will continue to have on Māori, and to recommend that the bill not be passed in recognition of this.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Hartono
NZMSA President 2025

Handwritten signature of Thomas Hartono in black ink.

Te Rato Leach
Tumuaki Te Oranga 2025

Handwritten signature of Te Rato Leach in black ink.



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