



19 September 2022

Tangata Whenua  
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Our ref: DSC 98854

Tēnā koe Tangata Whenua

### **New Zealand's constitutional arrangements**

Thank you for your email of 31 August 2022, in which you asked if New Zealand has a written constitution. Your request has been referred to me for a response, as it falls within my responsibilities as General Manager, Civil and Constitutional Policy.

New Zealand does not have a single written constitution. Instead, our constitutional arrangements are contained in various laws, documents and conventions. The laws include Acts of Parliament such as:

- the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (which sets out core fundamental rights and freedoms);
- the Constitution Act 1986 (which sets out our fundamental constitutional framework, such as the powers of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government);
- the Electoral Act 1993 (which sets out the rules that govern how our electoral system operates); and
- the Human Rights Act 1993 (which seeks to promote freedom from discrimination and fair and equitable treatment of all people).

Other documents relating to constitutional matters include:

- the Treaty of Waitangi (which established a constitutional relationship between Māori and the Crown);
- documents issued under the authority of the Queen of New Zealand in her capacity as our head of state (such as the Letters Patent 1983 constituting the Office of Governor-General of New Zealand); and
- the Cabinet Manual (which outlines some of our constitutional conventions and practices).

Access to the laws mentioned and the Letters Patent can be found on the New Zealand Legislation website at [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz). The Treaty can be found at [waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/](http://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/), and the Cabinet Manual can be found at [dpmc.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual](http://dpmc.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual).

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Nāku nōa nā

Kathy Brightwell  
**General Manager, Civil and Constitutional Policy**