



16 September 2022

Kahurangi

fyi-request-20415-5c7447aa@requests.fyi.org.nz

Our ref: DSC 98854

Tēnā koe Kahurangi

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

Thank you for your emails of 31 August 2022 and 12 September 2022, in which you ask if New Zealand has a written constitution and request royal assent documents for said 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).

You have also requested a recording of the royal assent for the written constitution of New Zealand. This request is declined under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the requested information does not exist.

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to complain to the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Act. The Ombudsman can be contacted by emailing [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz); calling 0800 802 602; or writing to:

The Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10152  
Wellington 6143

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Nāku noa nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brightwell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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