

Project name: The political influence of vested interests via lobbying and political donations
Principal Investigator: Dr Bryce Edwards

Summary

This project aims to map how wealthy and powerful interests use the lobbying industry, personal connections with elites, and financial contributions to political entities to benefit themselves and perpetuate the power and favoured public policies of elites. It will bring to light how New Zealand democracy is negatively impacted by these practices, to the detriment of those without access to these levers and will research and offer practical policy solutions to counter these influences.

This research is vital because there is a real lacuna of research and evidence about the inequality of the political process in New Zealand. Crucially, the almost complete lack of any regulatory or legislative oversight of the lobbying industry and the very close personal connections between politicians, industry, public servants, and media has resulted in what has been characterised as a “revolving door” where conflicts of interest are almost entirely unmanaged.

The project will focus heavily on informing the public about the existence and effect of lobbying and donations by publishing early and regularly in the mainstream media. Two public campaigns will be run on reforming laws and practices relating to political finance and lobbying. These will include legislative reform proposals and the project timeline will neatly overlap with the recently announced Independent Review of Electoral Law.

By increasing the visibility of (alleged) integrity violations of politicians, and in particular conflicts of (financial) interests, the Political Integrity Index NZ contributes to enhancing ethical leadership practices in government and business and can help reduce ethical risks and failures.

Outputs

- Another trial over secret political donations - 28 July 2022
- If the NZ First Foundation accused are not guilty, then who is? - 22 July 2022
- Public submissions on political donation reform released - 21 July 2022
- Government appointments under scrutiny - 5 July 2022
- Tinkering with donation laws leaves money buying politics - 1 July 2022
- Wealthy can buy access to power – and politicians don’t want this changed - 23 June 2022
- NZ First’s court trial shows the need for political finance reform - 11 June 2022
- Was the Government’s climate plan watered down by lobbying? - 27 May 2022
- Major shakeup of electoral rules could be coming - 26 May 2022
- Massive Wage Subsidy and Covid spending is under scrutinised - 11 May 2022
- Questions of integrity surround the Government’s tourism “slush fund” - 5 April 2022
- Wouldn’t it be great if political parties opened their books - 4 April 2022
- Bouquets and brickbats for the Government’s move against corruption - 23 March 2022
- The Big “consultocrats” debate needs to carry on - 13 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/13/bryce-edwards-the-big-consultocrats-debate-needs-to-carry-on/>
- National’s progressive childcare-consultocracy switch - 6 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/06/bryce-edwards-4/>
- The Horrific damage caused by forestry slash and vested interests - 27 February 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/02/27/bryce-edwards-the-horrific-damage-caused-by-forestry-slash-and-vested-interests/>
- Time for a big debate about Govt use of business consultants - 10 February 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/02/10/bryce-edwards-time-for-a-big-debate-about-govt-use-of-business-consultants/>
- Chris Hipkins hires a lobbyist to run the Beehive - 2 February 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/02/02/bryce-edwards-3/>
- Clawing back \$7bn of corporate welfare - 2 December 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/12/02/bryce-edwards-clawing-back-7bn-of-corporate-welfare/>
- Momentum growing to reform lobbying laws - 15 November 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/11/15/bryce-edwards-momentum-growing-to-reform-lobbying-laws/>
- Lobbyists use the revolving door into mayoral offices - 18 October 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/10/18/bryce-edwards-lobbyists-use-the-revolving-door-into-mayoral-offices/>
- Faafoi’s lobbying position should be illegal - 7 October 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/10/07/bryce-edwards-faafois-lobbying-position-should-be-illegal/>
- Te Pāti Māori and vested interests - 30 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/30/bryce-edwards-political-roundup-te-pati-maori-and-vested-interests/>
- Public sector bosses must be held accountable for undermining transparency - 29 September 2022

<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/29/bryce-edwards-public-sector-bosses-must-be-held-accountable-for-undermining-transparency/>

- Time for the Auditor General to investigate Mahuta contracts - 21 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/21/bryce-edwards-time-for-the-auditor-general-to-investigate-mahuta-contracts/>
- Fighting for cleaner and fairer elections - 15 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/15/bryce-edwards-fighting-for-cleaner-and-fairer-elections/>
- Ardern is right to insist on ethical standards, even on chocolate endorsements - 2 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/02/bryce-edwards-ardern-is-right-to-insist-on-ethical-standards-even-on-chocolate-endorsements/>
- Time to take political donations law seriously - 3 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/03/bryce-edwards-time-to-take-political-donations-law-seriously/>

Project name: The Political Integrity Index New Zealand
Principal Investigator: Professor Karin Lasthuizen
Associate Investigator- Associated Political Analyst: Dr Bryce Edwards

Summary

How often are politicians confronted with public allegations of integrity violations, and which types of violations and political parties are involved? How did the public and media respond? Were there investigations into the accusations, and what were the consequences for the people involved?

This project will answer these questions and release a Political Integrity Index for New Zealand annually, which includes political integrity scandals involving politicians at the national level, i.e. Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers (DPMC) and Members of Parliament (MPs) and in local governments, i.e. Mayor and Council, Regional Councils, District Health Boards and Community Boards.

Based on intensive media search and additional investigations, (alleged) wrongdoing of politicians will be systematically categorised in the coming years according to the following typology, which was developed and validated in previous research of PI Professor Karin Lasthuizen:

Typology of Integrity Violations

- 1) Corruption: bribery
- 2) Corruption: favouritism (nepotism, cronyism, patronage)
- 3) Fraud and theft of resources
- 4) Conflict of (private and public) interests through gifts - including political party donations
- 5) Conflict of (private and public) interests through side-line activities, jobs, and lobbying
- 6) Improper use of authority
- 7) Misuse and manipulation of information
- 8) Waste and abuse of organisational resources
- 9) Indecent treatment, e.g., discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying
- 10) Private-time misconduct.

Outputs

Dr Bryce Edwards columns on political integrity

- The Troubling report into Stuart Nash's conflicts of interest - 19 June 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/06/19/bryce-edwards-the-troubling-report-into-stuart-nashs-conflicts-of-interest/>
- Does Michael Wood have enough integrity to be a minister - 8 June 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/06/08/bryce-edwards-does-michael-wood-have-enough-integrity-to-be-a-minister/>
- The Astonishing Government suppression of Nash's email - 31 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/31/bryce-edwards-the-astonishing-government-suppression-of-nashs-email/>
- Is it time for an anti-corruption commission? - 30 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/30/bryce-edwards-is-it-time-for-an-anti-corruption-commission/>
- Nash's sacking means a deeper probe into cabinet "insider trading" is required - 29 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/29/bryce-edwards-nashs-sacking-means-a-deeper-probe-into-cabinet-insider-trading-is-required/>
- Stuart Nash's resignation shows our leaders need a lesson in civics - 16 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/16/bryce-edwards-stuart-nashs-resignation-shows-our-leaders-need-a-lesson-in-civics/>
- Faafoi's lobbying position should be illegal - 7 October 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/10/07/bryce-edwards-faafois-lobbying-position-shouldbe-illegal/>
- Time for the Auditor General to investigate Mahuta contracts - 21 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/21/bryce-edwards-time-for-the-auditor-general-toinvestigate-mahuta-contracts/>
- National's unsatisfactory exoneration of Sam Uffindell - 20 September 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/20/bryce-edwards-nationals-unsatisfactoryexoneration-of-sam-uffindell/>
- Ardern is right to insist on ethical standards, even on chocolate endorsements - 2 September 2022

<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/09/02/bryce-edwards-ardern-is-right-to-insist-on-ethical-standards-even-on-chocolate-endorsements/>

- Mallard's diplomatic appointment lacks integrity - 26 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/26/bryce-edwards-mallards-diplomatic-appointment-lacks-integrity/>
- Why the Gaurav Sharma drama is important - 25 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/25/bryce-edwards-why-the-gaurav-sharma-drama-is-important/>
- The Uffindell scandal raises big questions about integrity in National - 9 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/09/bryce-edwards-the-uffindell-scandal-raises-big-questions-about-integrity-in-national/>
- Is Tauranga headed towards yet another by-election? - 10 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/10/bryce-edwards-is-tauranga-headed-towards-yet-another-by-election/>
- If the NZ First Foundation accused are not guilty, then who is? - 22 July 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/07/22/bryce-edwards-if-the-nz-first-foundation-accused-are-not-guilty-then-who-is/>
- Government appointments under scrutiny - 5 July 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/07/05/bryce-edwards-government-appointments-under-scrutiny/>

Jacqui Van Der Kaay columns on political integrity

- Candidate selection process under fire again - 24 April 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/04/24/jacqui-van-der-kaay-candidate-selection-process-under-fire-again/>
- The personal is political - 6 April 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/04/06/jacqui-van-der-kaay-the-personal-is-political/>
- Broken trust led to sacking - 29 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/29/jacqui-van-der-kaay-broken-trust-led-to-sacking/>
- Integrity of politicians deserves scrutiny - 28 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/28/jacqui-van-der-kaay-integrity-of-politicians-deserves-scrutiny/>
- Integrity issues at the heart of resignation - 16 March 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/03/16/jacqui-van-der-kaay-integrity-issues-at-the-heart-of-resignation/>
- Scandal and stretching the truth - 27 February 2023
<https://democracyproject.nz/2023/02/27/jacqui-van-der-kaay-scandal-and-stretching-the-truth/>
- The Barbara Kuriger controversy raises further questions about political integrity - 19 October 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/10/19/jacqui-van-der-kaay-the-barbara-kuriger-controversy-raises-further-questions-about-political-integrity/>
- Personal integrity in politics - 9 August 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/08/09/jacqui-van-der-kaay-personal-integrity-in-politics/>
- Te Puke is not Hawaii - 28 July 2022
<https://democracyproject.nz/2022/07/28/jacqui-van-der-kaay-te-puke-is-not-hawaii/>

Prof Karin Lasthuizen in the media on political integrity

- Interview (quote) in The Herald Why Mahuta family contracts warrant scrutiny by Kate MacNamara - 27 August 2022
<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/opinion-kate-macnamara-why-mahuta-family-contracts-warrant-scrutiny/6QGG6GPD6ZCGQL2S5FZBOFKQA/>

Project name: Political Party Funding Reform in New Zealand
Principal Investigator: Lisa Marriott
Associate Investigator: Max Rashbrooke

Summary

This project aims to support reform of the laws governing party funding, and thus addresses serious concerns about the integrity of New Zealand's democratic system. It will do this by developing rigorous recommendations on party political funding and exploring paths for reform.

The costs of campaigning make New Zealand's political parties increasingly expensive to run. Yet their funding from members has dwindled, leaving them dependent on large private donations. This opens the door to unequal influence for donors. Currently New Zealand has minimal, easily circumvented regulation concerning donations. But concerns about party funding are rising, spurred by evidence of disproportionate donor access and multiple court cases. The time is right for a comprehensive report outlining the shortcomings of current funding arrangements, exploring potential reform options, and laying the groundwork for change.

Our specific objectives are to:

- document existing issues with political party funding arrangements via quantitative and qualitative research;
- consult widely (through interviews and public engagement) on policy options for political party funding; and
- set out potential paths for reform.

The quantitative element will build on a comprehensive database of post-1996 political donations compiled by Victoria University of Wellington researchers. We will use this to investigate further patterns of donations and potential influence. The proposed nationwide survey will build on existing knowledge of community views about political party funding and will help establish the public's preferred policy options.

The qualitative element, meanwhile, will elicit further details from the public (through focus groups) and from decision-makers (through interviews). The latter will also help us understand the different potential routes to reform.

The overall objective is to produce a report of sufficient rigour, clarity, and even-handedness to have credibility across the political spectrum, enhancing the likelihood of reform. Recent suggestions for change from across the spectrum suggest a rare level of openness to this discussion.

Outputs

- *Money for Something: A report on political party funding in Aotearoa New Zealand* available at <https://www.doughnation.nz/> and <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/business/research/researchers/more-featured-researchers/supporting-political-party-funding-law-reform>
- A Reform Architecture for Political Party Funding in Aotearoa New Zealand <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/pq/article/view/8108>
- It's time we closed the political donation backdoor <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/30-11-2022/its-time-we-closed-the-political-donation-backdoor>
- 'They're nice to me, I'm nice to them': new research shed light on what motivates political party donors in New Zealand <https://theconversation.com/theyre-nice-to-me-im-nice-to-them-new-research-sheds-light-on-what-motivates-political-party-donors-in-new-zealand-185574>
- Two decades of donation scandals - so where are the prosecutions? <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/opinion/129600140/two-decades-of-donation-scandals--so-where-are-the-prosecutions>

Television interviews

- TVNZ Breakfast - 29 November 2022
- NBR Television - 28 November 2022
- Newstalk ZB: Mike Hosking Breakfast - 29 November 2022

Mainstream online coverage

- <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/big-money-donors-get-access-to-pms-and-party-leaders-report/IOLF7K6XLZERBOJ6LQSESUTR4I/>
- <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/130601411/political-donations-identity-over-1500-should-be-disclosed-new-report-recommends>

- <https://www.nbr.co.nz/politics/buying-influence-through-political-donations/>
- <https://businessdesk.co.nz/article/politics/reform-political-donations-before-we-become-like-the-us-report>

Radio

- Radio NZ, The Panel, 29 November

Project name: 2023 New Zealand Election Study, Party Funding Section
Principal Investigator: Jack Vowles
Co-Investigator: Mona Krewel

Summary

This module of questions will be included in the 2023 New Zealand Election Study (NZES). They will identify key aspects of public opinion about the funding of political parties; put simply, we will ask what New Zealanders feel and think about how political parties are funded and how they respond to some of the options for reform. This question is important because it is currently under debate in New Zealand, with reforms to the legislation pending and an independent review in progress.

The 2023 NZES will also run Module 6 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) with questions on citizens' perceptions of political elites and out-groups, and the implications for electoral democracy. With other questions from the NZES, including standard socio-demographics, these can be used for a deeper analysis of public attitudes to political parties and what lies beneath them. The 2023 questionnaire will continue a core of 2020 and earlier questions, drop some, and add new ones.

Outputs

Research in progress.

Project name: Renovating political engagement for circular bio-economy transitions: from stakeholder advocacy to Participatory Technology Assessments
Principal Investigator: Valentina Dinica

Summary

New Zealand's economic model is at a crossroads. Primary industries have been the pillar of an ecologically-disastrous model. Commercial interests have persuaded key political parties to push a dated 'Bio-economy Zero' (BE-0) model beyond the country's ecological capacity. Recent election results have signalled that New Zealanders are ready to transition towards an ecologically viable economy. But the current avenues for political engagement are not effective for citizens and environmental/sustainability stakeholders. Significant renovations of the institutional and public engagement landscapes are needed, for more meaningful and timely public input to decision-making. Such revisions are essential for transitions to a 'circular bio-economy' (CBE) that numerous OECD countries already implement. CBE refers to innovations leading to resource sustainability, by transitioning to a zero-waste 'cradle-to-cradle' economy; technological sustainability, by replacing minerals/metals with biomass, to reduce pollution); consumption and social sustainability, by focusing on needs, well-being, and regional, resilient supply chains.

The project will examine and diffuse knowledge on the current approaches and institutional renovation options regarding the political influence of citizens, consumers, and environmental/sustainability organisations, towards ecologically-sound CBE transitions in New Zealand. The aims are pursued through three activity types.

Diagnosis research (RQ1). What stakeholder advocacy patterns are deployed and what public engagement mechanisms are available to influence political and governmental decisions on CBE? This includes comparative analyses of opportunities afforded to commercial organisations, relative to citizens and not-for-profit actors, regarding non-GE bio-technologies/bio-products (BE-1); GE-driven bio-economy (BE-2); and circular economy (CE).

Renovation research (RQ2). How to institutionalise and implement Participatory Technology Assessments (PTA) that enhance the engagement of citizens and not-for-profit actors in decisions on CBE technologies and science funding? Recommendations include legislative, administrative, and methodological innovations to incorporate PTAs across governmental levels.

Outputs

The Principal Investigator declined an offer of partial funding for one year out of the three requested.