

Understanding the Māori Purposes Bill 2024: What You Need to Know Before Making a Submission

Purpose of the Bill: The Māori Purposes Bill is an omnibus bill that makes minor, technical, and non-controversial changes to existing laws affecting Māori governance and affairs. It aims to modernise outdated legislation, reduce red tape, enable electronic processes, and improve how Māori organisations function. It does not introduce new policy or change rights but tidies up outdated provisions.

Key Amendments

- **Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993:** Allows electronic meetings, clarifies trust and minor-related issues, and simplifies court processes.
- **Māori Trustee Act 1953:** Streamlines operations to make the Māori Trustee more efficient and transparent.
- **Māori Trust Boards Act 1955:** Updates language, allows digital meetings, and improves board appointment processes.
- **Māori Television Service Act 2003:** Supports Whakaata Māori in adapting to digital platforms and broadening audience engagement.
- **Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016:** Clarifies Te Mātāwai's role and strengthens reo Māori revitalisation efforts.

Should You Support the Bill? Yes, **with some caveats.** The Bill is helpful in modernising Māori legislation and does not reduce rights or increase Crown control. However, it misses an opportunity to address deeper systemic issues like underinvestment in Māori development, structural inequities, financial barriers, a lack of real support for tino rangatiratanga, and the ongoing challenges faced by Māori landowners.

What to Include in a Submission

- Support the overall intent to modernise and streamline Māori-related legislation.
- Recommend stronger consultation with Iwi, hapū, and landowners – not just Māori entities – for future reforms.
- Push for bolder changes that truly support Māori self-determination i.e., increasing Māori-led oversight, protections for whenua Māori, or strengthening mechanisms for community-level decision-making.
- Call out the Bill's failure to address economic inequity and structural disadvantage, and or include other much needed Bills for consideration including the Māori Community Development Act 1962.

Changes to Land and Trustee Laws: Are They Enough?

The updates to Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 and the Māori Trustee Act 1953 are helpful but limited. They improve efficiency, but do not address deeper concerns about accessibility,

transparency, and community control. Māori landowners deserve a full, co-designed review of these laws that puts tikanga and rangatiratanga at the centre.

The changes to Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 may streamline processes, but the Act as a whole remains **complex, legalistic, and intimidating** for many Māori landowners. It needs a more **fundamental overhaul**, co-designed with Māori landowners, to make land succession, governance, and utilisation truly accessible. You could note this in your submission.

Updates to the Māori Trustee Act 1953 may improve efficiency, but many Māori have longstanding concerns about **the lack of transparency, accountability, and community control over their whenua and finances** when it is managed by the Māori Trustee. These concerns are not addressed in the current amendments and should be noted in your submission.

Summary: Support the Bill for its administrative improvements but urge the government to go further. Use your submission to ask for stronger reforms that reflect the realities and aspirations of Māori communities and landowners today.